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**ANOTHER WAY OUT: THE WARTIME COMMUNIST  
MOVEMENT IN JIANGSU, 1937-1945**

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**ANOTHER WAY OUT: THE WARTIME COMMUNIST  
MOVEMENT IN JIANGSU, 1937-1945**

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**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

*To Feng, Anthony, and my parents  
with love*

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# **ANOTHER WAY OUT: THE WARTIME COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN JIANGSU, 1937-1945**

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This dissertation examines the survival and expansion strategies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) by focusing on its organization and mobilization activities during the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945). I argue that the Communist forces quickly expanded during the wartime not merely because the War provided an opportunity to avoid the *Guomindang* (GMD)'s intensive military aggression and legitimately expand itself throughout China. More importantly, it also allowed the CCP to develop a unique political culture with a grasp on local knowledge during the years under investigation. This cultural climate worked to rejuvenate itself through organizational consolidation and the rebuilding of political identity. Together, these factors accounted for the dramatic expansion of the CCP's membership and military forces, which prepared the Party for its takeover of the country after the Japanese surrender.

The main body of this dissertation is composed of five thematic chapters. Chapter two explores the CCP's penetration into local society through mass resistance

associations and political renovation of existing power structures. Chapter three investigates Communist propaganda activities, the success of which laid in coordination with the Party's follow-up organizational arrangements. The next chapter examines the Communist educational institutions as a channel of mass mobilization that further reinforced its penetration into various social groups. Chapter five uses Grain Tax, conscription and mobilization of anti-pacification campaign, all of which required personal sacrifice from the masses, as three instances that exemplified the Party's controllability over local communities. Finally, chapter six focuses on its strategies to contain undesirable tendencies of local cadres and strengthen ideological consensus within the Party.



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## Note of Chinese Names and Terms

This dissertation follows the standard practice in the field of using *Hanyu Pinyin* transliterations for Chinese names, places, and other special terms, except for some conventionally renowned names in English literatures, such as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek. The general treatment of Chinese words here is to put English translations in the text and original transliterations in parentheses right after.

Political/Military Structure of the Communist Base Areas in Jiangsu (1941-1945)

### Political Unit

Region, i.e. base (*genjudi*)

District (*qu/fenqu*)

County (*xian*)

Sub-district (*qu*)

Town (*xiang*)

Village (*cun/bao*)

### Military Unit

Division (*shi*)

Regiment (*tuan*)

Company (*lian*)/Battalion (*ying*, sometimes)

Platoon (*tuan*)

## Chapter One Introduction

When thirteen young men congregated in a house in the Shanghai French Concession in 1921 to discuss the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), communism was merely a fashionably exotic discourse that some Chinese intellectuals suggested for modernizing China. When the Soviet government in Ruijin, Jiangxi Province, was founded in 1932, the CCP had forfeited the majority of its urban branches and retreated to the countryside in order to restore its military strength and organizational structures. When Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist (*Guomindang*, abbreviated as GMD) government launched five consecutive offensives on the Jiangxi Soviet, forcing the CCP to evacuate from their newly built base regions in 1934, the permanent extermination of Chiang's "disease in heart" (*xinfu zhi huan*) seemed inevitable. A year later when Mao Zedong claimed a major victory in the "strategic transferring," better known as the Long March, the CCP had actually lost almost 90% of the regular military forces it developed in the Jiangxi period.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these early setbacks, however, by 1945 the CCP was able to construct a military force of 310,000 soldiers and establish seven regional bases in central China. In Jiangsu Province, the focus of this dissertation, alone, the three major bases held more

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<sup>1</sup> The most prevalent estimation in China is that the First Corps had about 80,000 soldiers when leaving Jiangxi but only about 8,000 survived when they arrived in Shaanxi in 1935; the Fourth Corps was about 80,000 soldiers large originally and less than 30,000 when they arrived in 1936; the Second and Sixth Armies of the Second Corps had about 17,000 soldiers at the beginning and around 10,000 upon arrival at Yan'an; the 25<sup>th</sup> Army suffered less battle loss and maintained the size of about 3,000 soldiers. However, these figures do not indicate the newly enlisted percentage during the course of the Long March. According to Chen Yung-fa, there were about 25,000 soldiers who breached the Nationalist besiegement in October 1934 survived when arriving in Shaanxi (Chen 1986, 1). However, it is not clear whether he included the ones who arrived in 1936.

than 15 million people within its total area of 90,000 K m<sup>2</sup> jurisdictions. This unprecedented development occurred during the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945). Four years later, in events as dramatic and surprising as any Hollywood blockbuster, the Chinese Revolution concluded with the Communist triumph and the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The reasons of the CCP's success have become one of the most popular topics among scholars of China.

This dissertation contributes to the historical scholarship about the Chinese Communist Revolution by exploring the local Communist movement in base areas in Jiangsu Province during the War of Resistance. By reconstructing daily operations and development of various CCP initiatives, it sheds light on a series of questions hovering over studies of the Communist movement: What factors accounted for the sensational development of the CCP during the War of Resistance? What kind of incentives did the Party employ to appeal to the masses in places with a prosperous economy? How did various social classes respond to the Party's mobilization? How did revolutionaries, local elites, peasants interact under the circumstances of the Communist mobilization and ongoing warfare? To what extent was the Party able to control local communities? And ultimately, how did such experiences contribute to the CCP's ultimate triumph in 1949?

My concentration on the base areas of Jiangsu partly stems from the less scholarly attention on this region in previous studies about the Chinese Revolution. Such neglect results from both the scarcity of primary sources as well as the conventional belief that Jiangsu was on the periphery of the Communist movement. The base areas of Jiangsu provide a provocative counterpoint to historian Mark Selden's reasons for studying the

Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region on the outcome of the Resistance War as well as the course of the Chinese revolution (Selden 1995b: 9-10).<sup>2</sup> They were the most prosperous areas in China, even under the Japanese occupation; Land redistribution initiatives had never been launched upon the CCP's arrival; they were adjacent to Nanjing, the capital of the collaborationist government, and thus, subject to the most powerful threats from the Japanese; they were located far from the central Party and military leadership in Yan'an, which, prior to 1941, made them more difficult to control than northern and northwest base areas. Previous studies also show that tenancy ratio and population density were higher in Jiangsu than the North China Plains and lands were concentrated in hands of big landlords who, in some cases, had moved to urban areas and hired brokers to collect rent on their behalf. A relative temperate natural environment and the lack of clear revolutionary targets have encouraged scholars to assume that peasants of Jiangsu were less likely to embrace revolutionary impulses.

This conventional perspective, however, has become subject to revision in light of recent research of the socioeconomic development of China. Peasants in Jiangsu Province, as Philip Huang convincingly demonstrates, did not enjoy a growing income with the increasingly commercialized economy and expanding market. According to Huang, gross production in both agriculture and family industry was improved because of the low cost of labor rather than technical innovations. As a result, the per capita income

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<sup>2</sup> According to Selden, Shaan-Gan-Ning was unique in four ways: "it was the poorest of the base areas; it alone had completed land redistribution in significant areas prior to the shift to united front strategies; it was largely spared Japanese invasion so that guerrilla warfare assumed a less central role than it did elsewhere during the resistance; and, finally, it was the home of the central Party and military leadership and the mecca for thousands of intellectuals and other patriot drawn to the resistance."



shrank during the Republican period (Huang 1990, 11-16). It is therefore reasonable to infer that increasing economic pressures provided the peasantry with sufficient cause to enact revolutionary mobilization of the CCP, even if they were not strong enough to take the initiative to rebel.

The Jiangsu experience, moreover, was pertinent for illustrating the CCP methods for future rule in China. It provided the Party with first-hand experience in governing a region with a prosperous commercialized economy, stable social structure and influential local elites. Jiangsu might stand in the periphery of the Party's revolutionary map. However, a region that provided annual revenue that almost matched the sum of its core revolutionary areas would inevitably become one of the focuses of the Communist government when the revolution succeeded. In this sense, the Jiangsu experience sheds light on the Party's future government as a state power after 1949.

The increasing accessibility of county-level Party documents makes a localized study feasible. While previously inaccessible, these resources can now be divided roughly into three categories. The first category contains internal party documents, including annual, semi-annual, quarterly working reports, investigating reports of different towns, and compiled local cadres' reflections on specific issues. Circulated within the Party, these documents reflect the conflicts and tensions between the masses and cadres, as well as the Party's perspective of the Communist development during the wartime. The second category consists of local newspapers, especially popular ones, the reporters of which were mostly local amateurs with low rate of literacy. These newspapers provide a good channel for evaluating the responses from ordinary peasants to the Communist

mobilization. The last category comes from collections of Literature and Historical Materials (*wenshi ziliao*) at county and lower levels, composed of local cadres' memoirs.<sup>3</sup> These memoirs are helpful in shedding light on the role of local cadres as mediators between the Party and the masses.

### **MACRO-HISTORY AND THE SEARCH OF A DECISIVE REASON**

Influenced by the historiographic trend of reconstructing macro-history, studies of the wartime Communist movement before the 1970s are more interested in seeking for an overarching or decisive reason, which can be applied to all the Communist base areas as a whole, to interpret the victory of the CCP. Meanwhile, confined by the accessibility of primary sources, scholars have focused primarily on elites, officials, and operations and decision-makings of high-ranking administration. While these studies have been useful in depicting a larger historical context, they simplify the course of the revolution and overestimate the agency of ordinary people for lacking a local perspective.

Although George Taylor has argued in 1940 that the CCP demonstrated an ability to incorporate peasants into its revolutionary movement by providing leadership for their military maneuvers against Japan in north China, this idea was not conceptualized and treated academically until Chalmers Johnson presented the theory of "peasant nationalism" (Johnson 1962). Johnson argues that Chinese peasants were outraged by the

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<sup>3</sup> These memoirs are compiled on the basis of a series of interviews that were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s by local university history professors and students or researchers. These interviews serve as a part of a large-scale program, sponsored by local governments, aimed at constructing local history and attracting tourists and investment. There is no doubt that the patrons and the interviewers had their own agenda when conducting these interviews. However, such preset agendas do not exclude their historical values. As Gregor Benton indicates in his books on the three year war and the New Four Army (1992, xx-xxv; 1999, 7-8), which use the similar sources as I do, with scrutiny, one can detect the embedded logic irony and ideological distortion, and thereby avoid misleading.

atrocities and hardships brought by the Japanese invasion, and their spontaneous resistance evolved into “peasant nationalism,” which the CCP took full advantage of during its own development. This theory has become a milestone in research on the Chinese revolution, turning scholarly attention from the ideologically biased theories of “Comintern conspiracy” and “Soviet manipulation” to the War of Resistance.<sup>4</sup> However, its overemphasis on the single extrinsic reason, i.e. the Resistance War, in deciding the course and outcome of the Chinese revolution largely ignores the social and economic conditions propelling peasant discontent. Such a simplistic explanation may have resulted from Johnson’s complete reliance on Japanese archival sources, preventing him from seeing a deeper interaction between the CCP and peasants. Nonetheless, it also reflected the issues embedded in other researchers of China at the time—to view the Chinese revolution as a purely imported product from external influences, especially western imperialism, and interpret it through an “impact-response” mechanism (Cohen 1984).

Johnson’s critics attribute the CCP’s phenomenal wartime growth to the socioeconomic actions of peasants as well as the Party. Mark Selden presents his model of the “Yan’an Way,” which, he contends, “represents a distinctive approach to economic development, social transformation and people’s war...[that] characteristic features included popular participation, decentralization and community power” (Selden 1995a, 170). The prerequisite of this model required implementation of the land reform program and redistribution of land ownership, which also helped the CCP survive the GMD’s

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed discussion, please refer to Mark Selden (1995b, 16-17). The representative works can be found but not limited to Hsiao (1961), McLane (1958), and Wilbur and How (1959).

attempts at annihilation. Selden incisively connects the socioeconomic dynamics, especially the deteriorating financial conditions, of the peasantry with the course of the Party's political revolution. As the first study of Communist base areas, his work encourages later scholars to dig into the intrinsic dynamics of peasant lives that would actively respond to the Party's mobilization.<sup>5</sup> However, Selden places too much faith in the Party's seemingly democratic and egalitarian institutions. He fails to recognize that all the moderate policies towards traditional elites and withdrawal of land reform were simply an expediency to minimize opposition and achieve growth in political and military forces during this unusual period. It is especially inconsistent when one tries to bring his populist image of the Party into subsequent events, such as the anti-rightist campaign, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution after 1949. Furthermore, although Selden insists on the significance of the Yan'an case regardless of its geographic and socioeconomic uniqueness compared with other Communist bases, it is difficult to apply this model to base areas, such as those in Jiangsu, where despite a complete absence of land reform the growth of party members and military strength was still unprecedented.

Other scholars have made significant influences on the scholarship by approaching the Communist Revolution from an organizational perspective. Tetsuya Kataoka called academic attention to the significance of the Second United Front, which he considers essential to the Communist success for its ability to neutralize oppositions, especially from the GMD, and maximizing support from the neutral power (Kataoka

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<sup>5</sup> Although Selden's book mainly focuses on the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, the author obviously believes that the Yan'an experience is applicable and illustrating as far as other base areas are concerned (Selden1995b, 10). Also, his work talks less about the operations of lower level administrations, which is very different from later area studies. Therefore, I discuss this book in this section.

1974, 4-17). He shares Johnson's contention that views the CCP as the beneficiary of the Resistance War in terms of its own development. However, Kataoka asserts that Japanese atrocities aroused parochial protection, instead of "peasant nationalism," among peasants, who formed "spontaneous mobilization" facilitating the Party's local Communist movement (101-116). His elitist focus prevents him from appreciating peasants' intrinsic request for revolution. Instead, he regards them as a passive factor subject to the Party's skillful mobilization (295-297). Logically, Kataoka does not find the necessity to examine socioeconomic conditions since he believes "[i]f poverty is related to revolution...the most massive poverty came with the revolution rather than as its precondition" (234). Therefore, he devotes his work to investigating the inner-party split on United Front policies between Mao Zedong, who argued for a peasant route, and Wang Ming, who claimed himself as an orthodox Marxist in favor of urban revolution. Kataoka suggests that it was because of the success of the United Front that the Party was able to appeal to a large enough number of urban intellectuals in rural regions to preempt peasant movement.

No matter what perspective the above studies adopt, they put the CCP and peasants on opposing sides of a scale, considering the former as the dominant force while completely silencing any reaction from the latter. Even Selden regards socioeconomic conditions as simply a reason for peasants to join the Communist revolution. In this sense, he adopts a method of investigating peasant involvement similar to Johnson and Kataoka. Their common and most problematic proposition lies in the one-way relationship between the Party and peasants in which the latter had little notable influence

on the revolution. With the development of area studies and a focus-shift from elites to history from the bottom up, scholars have become increasingly focused on exploring popular uprisings and a growing emphasis has gone into investigating peasants' role in shaping the course and outcome of the Chinese Revolution.

#### **BASE AREA STUDIES: BETWEEN POWER POLITICS AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

The People's Republic of China's open-door policy begun in the late 1970s has increased accessibility to local archives, encouraging a more detailed investigation of the Chinese Revolution in many different localities. Kathleen Hartford's observation on the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region shows that Japanese repression, both "contingent and generalized," did not necessarily prompt "peasant nationalism," as Johnson asserts. On the contrary, it exerted considerable psychological intimidation on local population, so much so that mass participation in resistance activities led by the CCP decreased considerably. Under such circumstances, survival, not mass mobilization, became the primary concern of a series of wartime measures for the Border Region (Hartford 1989, 94-96). Later, Pauline Keating's study convincingly demonstrates that even within Shan-Gan-Ning, the "Yan'an way" was not applicable to the entire border region. Although recognizing Selden's theoretical contribution, she qualifies the "Yan'an way" as "a product of quite special circumstances that were not replicable in most other parts of China" (Keating 1997, 2). Keating suggests that ecological characteristics were essential in shaping the course of the local Communist movement and accounted for the varieties between the two adjacent subregions, Suide and Yanshu. Generally speaking, base area studies are more interested in offering detailed descriptions of local Communist

movements than constructing an overarching framework applicable to explain the outcome of the Chinese Revolution.

In addition to the emphasis on local characteristics, another major theme emerging from studies of base areas is their struggle to align with one side of a wider historiographical debate—to view the Communist movement as either a course of power politics or a social revolution. Scholars rarely disagree with the idea that the CCP and the peasantry were the two major factors in the Communist Revolution, but their debate is usually centered on the relationship and interaction between the two. Those who conceptualize the Communist movement as one of power politics usually stress the Party's organizational excellence, while proponents of the social revolution paradigm value the intrinsic dynamics of preexisting socioeconomic conditions motivating peasants' mass participation in the revolution. No longer confined within a theoretical obligation to monocausal interpretation, their contentions do not fall on either end of the spectrum, nor do they regard the other as mutually exclusive. Actually, both sides agree on various dimensions of the Communist Revolution. Their divergence occurs when it comes to deciding who, the CCP or the peasantry, played a deciding role in shaping the revolutions' course and outcome.

This oscillation between the arguments of power politics and social revolution is better understood within the framework of another far-reaching debate about “moral economy” versus “rational peasants.” The growth of base area studies has indicated a shift from an elitist perspective to a popular history approach in understanding the Chinese Revolution, bringing the peasantry to the center of the discussion. Thus, the most

fundamental and frequent inquiry falls on the motivations that made peasants join or initiate the revolution. James Scott, a pioneer moral economist, contends that revolution in precapitalist peasant societies is essentially peasants' radical reaction to the breach of the communal moral agreement that guarantees the right of subsistence and the principle of reciprocity among community members, most importantly, the "subsistence ethic." Once peasants' right of subsistence was denied or became insecure, peasants would widely endorse violent actions, such as uprisings or revolutions (Scott 1976). This theory also explains why protests or revolutions typically coincided with natural disasters. Under this influence, most base area studies pay special attention to the ecological environment of their localities and how it shaped the characteristics of local Communist movement (Wou 1994; Keating 1997).

Moral economists' major critics refuse to accept the preexistence of the subsistence ethic, which conceptualizes peasants' behavior fundamentally as a pattern of risk-aversion, and the assumption that peasants were satisfied to keep their lives at the level of subsistence. Instead, Samuel Popkin insists on regarding peasants as rational entrepreneurs who maximized individual or family interests throughout the course of revolution (Popkin 1979). In this sense, their commitment to revolution was contingent and easy to shift when the incentives that had motivated them changed or disappeared. Popkin puts too much stake in economic profits and in doing so largely simplifies the process of mobilization, making it into a social exchange between material benefits and political support while neglecting other local factors, such as conventions, rituals, underlying moral codes and public opinions.



Apart from the contention of “moral versus material” incentives, a fundamental disagreement in the power politics versus social revolution debate falls on their distinctive treatment of the role of the peasantry: whether they were able to maintain their autonomy to shape the course of the revolution or merely exchanged their loyalty with outside revolutionaries to maximize personal gain. Ralph Thaxton insists that peasants played a dynamic role in the development of the Chinese Revolution. Based on his study of northern China, he argues that revolution was a bottom-up process in which peasants not only participated but also fashioned its course with their intrinsic revolutionary initiatives embedded in popular culture (Thaxton 1983). He further asserts that “[t]he CCP derived its legitimacy by dancing to the demanding tunes of decentralized governments, not by orchestrating its own centrist plan for power” (227). In his later book about peasant salt-makers of the North China Plains, Thaxton continues to emphasize the peasants’ deciding role in the Communist movement, contending that Party organizers succeeded in winning local support only because they were willing to ally with existing local protest organizations established by salt producers, which also accounted for the GMD’s failure in this region (1997).

When stressing the central role of the peasantry in shaping the Chinese experience, researchers can never avoid the role of an outside revolutionary organization, namely the CCP. According to Scott, peasants resorted to uprising or revolution with the ultimate goal of restoring the breached moral codes of the subsistence ethic. Nevertheless, their attempt did not square well with the Communist revolutionary agenda, which intended to destroy the existing power hierarchy and mechanisms of rule of elites,

redistribute social resources, and establish a new state. How did such a conceptual gap merge and how did the CCP prevent peasants from satisfying with reestablishing political order in their communities in order to push the revolution forward? Scholars who regard the Chinese Revolution foremost as power politics focus on an organizational perspective to explain how the CCP forged and reinforced the Party-peasant coalition. Thus, in his encyclopedic study on the base areas of eastern and central China, Chen Yung-fa continuously emphasizes the Party's skillful organization, implied by his title, "Making Revolution" (Chen Yung-fa 1986). Although recognizing "it was primarily redistribution that enabled the Communist Party to involve peasants in the anti-Japanese resistance" (99), he argues that the organizational development, which he defines as a process of "controlled polarization," was responsible for irreversibly deconstructing the bond between peasants and traditional rural elites and forging the new Party-peasant coalition during the War. Chen points out that the CCP deliberately blurred the rigid class division it had adopted in the Jiangxi period (1932-1934) and simply categorized people as the "basic masses" (*jiben qunzhong*) and the "feudal forces" (*fengjian shili*). Hence, when it engaged in rural struggle between the two groups, the Party was able to maximize popular support by siding with the local majority.

Odoric Wou's study on Henan Province, which traces back to the peak of the urban proletarian movement in 1925, shares Chen's contention about the strategic and organizational supremacy of the CCP in seizing opportunities for mobilization, though he is quite aware of the importance of the Party's efforts to improve the material conditions of peasants, in the form of famine relief and production programs (Wou 1994, 314-326).

He persuasively demonstrates that relying on appropriate strategies the Communists were able to mobilize people in both remote and backward villages as well as more commercialized areas (129). Steven Levine goes even further in emphasizing the Party's organizational skills. Based on his study of the Communist Revolution in Manchuria, he denies the existence of any innate revolutionary initiative in the peasantry. Instead, he claims, it is "inaccurate to term the Communist revolution a peasant revolution if by that term one means a radical rural transformation carried out by a movement led by authentic peasant leaders in order to achieve the reordering of political, economic, and social power relations in the countryside" (Levine 1987). For Levine, it was the Party's military strength and skillful organizational manipulation that accounted for their success, at least in Manchuria.

The varieties of different regions in China, including geographic, ecological, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, explain the complexities and nuances of the course of the Chinese Revolution. The roles of the peasantry and the CCP—the degree of the former's autonomy or the effectiveness of the latter's organizational ability—varied considerably in different areas. For instance, when one discusses the course of the Communist Revolution, the importance of resource redistribution, regardless of whether they were due to peasant's internal impulse to restore their subsistence or a material benefit that the CCP utilized to forge the Party-peasant bond, is undeniable. Previous base area studies have shown that redistribution was achieved through various channels. In North China, where owner-cultivators comprised the majority of population and the Party appeared as a visible state power, land reform proved to be the most effective, although

radical, way to accomplish the goal of redistribution (Selden 1971; Wou 1994; Keating 1997). In eastern and central China, Chen Yung-fa suggests that the process of redistribution largely relied on rent and interest reduction, tax reform and the mutual aid program (Chen 1986). However, the effectiveness of tax reform as a measure of redistribution is dubious considering that the tax rate in Jiangsu remained unchanged, if not increased, during wartime. Meanwhile, the high tenancy rate among the local population made rent rather than tax the population's primary burden (Bernhardt 1992; Liu Chang 2003). I will show in later chapters that redistribution in the base areas of Jiangsu occurred in a more moderate fashion. It consisted of a series of measures including rent reduction, mutual aid and tax rate (not reform) favorable to the class of middle peasants and encouraged social mobility. All these varieties and complexities in specific regions must be conceptualized in terms of a comprehensive consideration of different theoretical models as well as concrete local conditions.

#### **“LOCAL KNOWLEDGE” AS THE MAJOR APPROACH**

This dissertation suggests that the secret of the Communist success in the Civil War (1946-1949) lays in the Party's consolidation efforts before the war. Such efforts made the CCP fundamentally different from the GMD, which lacked organizational cohesiveness and ideological indoctrination despite its design as a Leninist party. I argue that the Communist force quickly expanded during the War of Resistance not merely because the War provided it with an opportunity to survive the GMD's intensive military aggression and legitimately expand itself all over China. More importantly, it also allowed the CCP to develop a unique political culture with its grasp of local knowledge

during the years under investigation—a cultural climate which worked to rejuvenate itself through organizational consolidation and the rebuilding of political identity. Together, these factors accounted for the dramatic expansion of the CCP’s membership and military forces, which prepared the Party for its future takeover of the country in 1949. The fundamental methodological principle guiding this inquiry, therefore, is its stress on the Communists’ efforts to build a revolution on the basis of preexisting social and cultural nexuses embedded in the peasant society, rather than breaking with them.

I shall demonstrate that local cultural and habitual practices, such as customs, rituals, and conventions, played a key role in shaping the behaviors and adopted strategies of the mobilizers and the mobilized in the development of the Communist movement. Instead of entirely destroying them, the Party heavily relied on these existing cultural nexuses to approach the masses, appeal to them and carry out their revolutionary agenda. For instance, during conscription, it employed different rituals and traditional ceremonies to rid villagers of the old idea that “good men do not join the army.” In the propaganda targeting the collaborationist forces, local cadres designed a strategy based on a combination of kinship affection and popular folk songs to incite their turn-over. The clever employment of “local knowledge”, to borrow from Clifford Geertz, became the key to Communist success in Jiangsu.

Working with the idea of “local knowledge,” I redefine the concept of “rational peasants.” I utilize Popkin’s idea that peasants attempted to seek profits through rational choices over the course of revolution. However, the definition of “rational” does not merely include maximizing economic benefits, nor are personal and family interests their only

concern. Clifford Geertz refers to the concept of “thick description” to demonstrate that the same gesture or phenomenon actually conveys different meanings depending on cultural settings, environments, participants’ physical conditions and psychological inclinations (Geertz 1973, 3-30). Accordingly, peasants’ decision-making over the course of the Communist movement was also a complex process determined by peasants’ personal evaluation of socioeconomic conditions, kinship relations, career expectation, as well as the embedded conventions, rituals, public opinions of their communities. This concept is particularly helpful as historians attempt to recognize peasants’ autonomy and view them as “rational” individuals at the same time that they view them in a collective manner. Relying on the local cadres, the CCP developed a comprehensive understanding of “local knowledge” in base areas and readily applied them to the process of each campaign and program. This enabled the Party to transform prevalent individual or communal impulses into a powerful social force that eventually facilitated the CCP’s penetration into communities and control of local society.

The “local knowledge” approach calls for special attention to the dual role of local cadres during Communist mobilization and penetration into local communities. Previous studies about the Chinese Revolution, regardless of whether they stressed external propellers or the intrinsic dynamics of the peasantry, dichotomize the CCP and its objectives in their attempts to investigate interaction between the two groups. Rarely do scholars investigate the people who actually make such interactions possible. Instead, scholars frequently reiterate that the Party sought out potential activists among the peasantry, and recruited them once the latter underwent significant training, making them

into “party cadres” and formal members of the Party. This generalization, however, simplifies the complexity and nuance of the multiple identities that “party cadres” developed. Instead of “party cadres,” I refer to these men as “local cadres,” addressing two of the important identities they carried: “local” men vis-à-vis the Party and party “cadres” vis-à-vis their own fellows. Besides the two roles, they were also fathers (in very rare cases mothers) to their families and had various social roles in their communities. These identities and their implied cultural meanings created numerous tensions in shaping the daily operation of the Party policies as well as the course of the local Communist movement.

Dedicating special attention to local cadres necessitates highlighting the significance of various mass associations, especially the peasant resistance association, as a buffering channel of “substantive government” to assist the Communist government in local administrative duties. There was a great variety in local administration in different localities of prewar China. Scholars such as Duara and Huang argue that the increasing tax burden demanded by the expanding state apparatuses discouraged traditional elites from acting as mediators between the state and the masses. A power vacuum resulted and was taken advantage of by local strongmen who abused this power for personal benefits. This transition of local power not only weakened the state’s control over the society; it also aroused massive resentment towards the state due to the misconduct of local bullies (Huang 1985, 264-291; Duara 1988, 217-243). Li Huaiyin confines this model to the peripheral areas of the North China Plains and argues that core areas, such as the Huailu County in Shandong Province, showed a more cooperative pattern in communities with

solitary lineage bonds, powerful elite leadership and an ecological friendly environment (Li Huaiyin 2005). Li refers to “substantive government” to describe the Xiangdi system as a semi-official institution in local tax collection. His model becomes particularly illustrating when I borrow it to examine the function of various mass associations in the daily operation of local Communist administrations. While Li emphasizes “the government’s noninterference, laissez-fair orientation and the predominance of informal practices” (10), I focus more on the “substantive” part, which the Party adopted as a convenient short cut and de facto administrative office to approach the masses. The Party labeled these associations as the representative of the masses’ opinions, hiding behind them to lead campaigns, such as rent reduction and mutual aid. However, the personnel overlap between mass associations, local administrations and party organs largely blurred the identities of local cadres and people’s perception of them, which revealed the CCP’s authoritarian heritage embedded in its political institutions.

In addition to the local perspective, I place wartime Communist movement of Jiangsu in a larger historical context, in which the Party perceived itself as a de facto state power. The outbreak of the Resistance War finally forced cooperation between the CCP and the GMD, and won the former legitimate status in the latter’s regime. After the Nationalist government evacuated from Nanjing, Jiangsu Province entered a de facto state of anarchy subject to Japanese invasion. *In this sense, the appearance of the Communist resistance forces appeared as an extension of the central government in people’s minds.* Therefore, the Resistance War created an abnormal situation during the Chinese Revolution, in which the CCP did not act as a revolutionary force aiming at



overthrowing the existing government. Rather it functioned as a part of the state, mandated by the second United Front, to exercise power. Hence, the Communist movement was not only a mobilization of available local sources, but also a process of state building that targeted the transformation of social structures and developed substantial control over local society.

#### **BASE AREAS IN JIANGSU PROVINCE**

The outbreak of the War of Resistance catalyzed the cooperation between the GMD and the CCP. Sanctioned by the Nationalist government, in October 1937, the Party began to convene its guerrilla forces in the fourteen guerrilla bases of eight provinces, including Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Hubei, Henan, Zhejiang and Anhui, and reorganized them into four guerrilla detachments (ten regiments), and one intelligence battalion.<sup>6</sup> To best contain the Communist influence in this newly established army, Chiang Kai-shek insisted on a non-Party commander. Eventually the two parties agreed on Ye Ting, a former GMD and CCP member during the first United Front (1924-1927) but had withdrawn his CCP membership due to the failure of the Guangzhou Uprising (1927). This resulting army of these guerrilla forces was named as the New Fourth Army (NFA). Its headquarters was officially established on December 25, 1937 in Hankou, Hubei Province and soon transferred to Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in January 1938. Meanwhile, the Nationalist government confined the activities of the NFA to the rear areas of the Japanese front in the south of the Yangtze River.

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<sup>6</sup> Most Chinese historians believe that there were altogether around 10,300 soldiers when these guerrilla forces were assembled. Another estimation claims the number of the whole roster to be around 8,000.

Disregarding GMD's restrictions, the NFA began to expand its spheres of influence eastward and northward toward Jiangsu Province under the guidance of the Party Central Committee. In April 1938, a pioneer division composed of part of the first and second detachments led by Chen Yi and Su Yu headed for Maoshan, the rear area of the Japanese occupied region, in southern Jiangsu Province. In the year that followed, relying on the military presence of the NFA, the Party successfully expanded and strengthened its political influence among the masses and established base areas in Zhenjiang, Jurong, Danyang, Jintang, Dangtu, and Yangzhong. Meanwhile, it strove to contact existing resistance forces and tried to assimilate them into its own military echelon. All these activities deeply worried the Nationalist government, which was alert to the possibility of the CCP's political and military expansion in the name of the ongoing warfare and the United Front. As a result, in January 1939, the Fifth Central Committee meeting of the GMD passed a proposal, entitled "Ways to confine the activities of the other party" (*xianzhi yidang huodong banfa*), to contain the CCP's further development. To avoid direct confrontation with the GMD and maintain a favorable stance within the United Front, the Party ordered the Sixth Regiment of the NFA to continue using the name "voluntary resistance army of Jiangnan," the badge of an existing local resistance force that had been reorganized into the NFA roster, when they launched forward into Cheng-Xi-Yu and Su-Chang-Tai areas (the rural areas around Wuxi, Suzhou, Changshu, Changzhou).

In contrast to their northern counterpart, namely the Eighth Route Army, which was almost free from the interference of the GMD, the NFA was besieged by the

Japanese and their collaborationist troops as well as the Nationalist forces in central China. Having been adjusted to independent guerrilla warfare between 1934 to 1937, NFA high-ranking leaders did not always comply with the Party Central Committee's orders. Instead, it oscillated between the priority of the United Front and the development of the Party and the NFA. In order to secure the survival of this newly established army, the Party Central Committee eventually decided to disregard GMD's restriction that confined their activities to the south of the Yangtze River, and crossed the River to found the Subei Regional Base at the end of 1939. Meanwhile, in May 1940 the Central Committee ordered Huang Kecheng to lead five regiments of the Second Column of the Eighth Route Army, almost 12,000 soldiers, moving southward to support Chen Yi in his skirmish against the Nationalist troops in north Jiangsu. This military maneuver attempted to strengthen the battle preparedness of the NFA and reinforce the Party's control over it. During this southbound trip, Huang's force enhanced its strength by assimilating with local guerrilla forces. When arriving in the border region of Jiangsu and Anhui in August, it was renamed as the Fifth Column of the Eight Route Army.

In the meantime, the NFA in Jiangsu was actively expanding the area under its control. After establishing the Subei regional headquarters of the NFA, Chen Yi and Su Yu launched an offensive attack on the Fourth Brigade of the Nationalist Provincial Safety Guard and occupied Huangqiao on July 29, 1940. The GMD found this defeat intolerable. Therefore, in the beginning of October, Han Deqin, the Nationalist Jiangsu Provincial Governor, assembled twenty-six regiments comprised of almost 34,000 soldiers to attack the NFA in Huangqiao. Although the NFA had a force of only 7,000,

they successfully defended their front and cost Han more than 11,000 casualties. Two months later, Chen and Su, supported by the Fifth Column of the Eighth Route Army, launched their final offensive on Han's forces. In these battles, the NFA achieved unprecedented victories against the Nationalist army. Han's forces were completely driven out of northern Jiangsu and Han himself was captured by the NFA. After this battle, the Nationalist political and military influence in north Jiangsu significantly withered and Communist resistance forces, replacing those of the GMD, became the major target of the Japanese and the collaborationist government.

The rapid military expansion of the NFA eventually led to the New Fourth Army Incident, in which the besieging Nationalist forces killed and captured nearly 7,000 of 9,000 soldiers in south Anhui in early January, 1941. The commissar, Xiang Ying, was killed, and the commander, Ye Ting, remained under arrest until 1946. Although the incident was a great loss for the NFA at the time, in the long run it actually put an end to military decentralization in central China. Aligning with Mao's major opponent, Wang Ming, Xiang openly refused Mao Zedong's instruction of "strengthening southward, fighting eastward, and expediting northward," regarding the development of the NFA. Due to the NFA's distance from Yan'an and Xiang's personal prestige in the prewar guerrilla warfare, Mao and his cult had much less control over the NFA than the Eighth Route Army before 1941. In this sense, the death of Xiang and the capture of Ye provided a timely opportunity for Mao to replace the existing NFA leadership with his appointees.

This trend of decentralization also existed outside the leadership of the NFA. In reality, there was no single centralized party organ that had the authority to direct the Communist movement in central China. Before the NFA pioneer team entered the Maoshan area, the Jiangsu Provincial Party Committee was rebuilt in Shanghai and began to dispatch party members and cadres to south and central Jiangsu to recruit new party members and organize local resistance forces. Before May 1940, the East Route (*dong lu*) District in southern Jiangsu was subordinate to the Jiangsu Provincial Committee while the Party Committee of Su-Wan District (border area between Jiangsu and Anhui provinces) was under the jurisdictions of the Southeast Bureau (*Dongnan ju*). Since the establishment of the Subei Regional Base relied on the NFA troops that had once built the Suzhong Regional Base, these two bases both reported to the Party Committee of the Suzhong Region. This Party Committee was closely associated with the NFA and reported to the Central Plain Bureau (*Zhongyuan ju*). In other words, there were altogether three paralleling party organs that had the authority to decide the path of development in their own jurisdictions. Such a complicated administrative system hindered the growth of a cohesive agenda of the Communist movement in Jiangsu Province.

The issue of military decentralization was solved after the New Fourth Army Incident. A new headquarters was reestablished, despite Chiang's order to dismiss the NFA, in Yancheng (north Jiangsu) on January 25, 1941. Mao's loyal supporters, Chen Yi and Su Yu, were promoted to the de facto positions of commander and deputy. To ensure his absolute control, Mao designated Liu Shaoqi, his closest partner in Yan'an, to be the

new commissar. By that point, Mao had successfully removed any reminiscence of the four-year guerrilla warfare that could potentially hinder his attempt of military centralization. The CCP Central Committee reorganized the NFA, together with Fifth Column of the Eight Route Army, into seven divisions, which was stationed in the seven Communist regional bases in central China. Until then, the size of the NFA had grown more than nine folds compared with the time of its establishment, reaching 90,000 soldiers.

Meanwhile, political centralization was also underway. In May of 1941 the Party Central Committee merged the Southeast Bureau and the Central Plain Bureau into the Central China Bureau (*Huazhong ju*), whose jurisdictions covered the NFA's entire sphere of influence. Liu Shaoqi became the secretary of the Central China Bureau, and the committee members included Chen Yi, Rao Shushi and Zeng Shan. Liu, Chen and Rao were respectively the commissar, the commander and the chief director of political department of the NFA. The leaders of the seven NFA divisions comprised the corresponding regional party committees in the bases where their troops were stationed. Eventually, the military and party joint institution was enforced, duplicating the model of the CCP's northern border regions.

Military and political centralization significantly strengthened Communist power in the Jiangsu base areas. Even under the Japanese and collaborationist government's frequent political and military attacks, the three major regional bases—Sunan, Suzhong and Subei—still achieved substantial development when the Resistance War came to an end. When the Japanese surrendered in August of 1945, the Sunan Regional Base had reached an administrative sphere of approximately 25,000 K m<sup>2</sup> with a controlled

population of almost six million people. The Sixth Division of the NFA, stationed in Sunan, and its subordinate local forces had grown to 50,000 soldiers (Zhonggong Jiangsu sheng dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui 1987, 16). According to statistic data about local party organs, the number of party members there had increased to more than 10,000 (Zhonggong Jiangsu shengwei zuzhibu 2001, 107). Meanwhile, the Suzhong Regional Base developed a jurisdictions of 23,000 Km<sup>2</sup> land and more than 5.1 million people. Party member enrollment in this region had reached the size of 31,135 (108-109).<sup>7</sup> In the case of Subei Regional Base, it covered an area of 42,000 Km<sup>2</sup> and controlled a population of 4.5 million. As the site of the NFA headquarters, this region had a much larger party member echelon. It was as large as 55,144 members including 2,587 females (119-120). In central China the size of the NFA and its directly subordinate local forces grew to seven divisions of around 310,000 soldiers at the end of the War of Resistance. Such an unprecedented development would not have been possible without a thorough mobilization and deep penetration into local society.

The main body of this dissertation is divided into five thematic chapters. Chapter two investigates the process of how the Party gradually deepened its penetration into local society in the base areas of Jiangsu. Upon its arrival, the Party established various mass associations to nurture its own power networks. It also instituted residency councils

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<sup>7</sup> Another report claimed the population of the Suzhong Regional Base was about eight million at the time (zhonggong Jiangsu sheng dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui 1989, 1). According to other relevant materials, I estimate that this number might include the entire population of both Communist base areas and Japanese occupied regions in Suzhong area. Therefore, I used the number of 5.1 million in the text.

to offset resistance from local elites. Near the end of the War, it launched the “New Township Renovation” to replace the existing elite class with its own local power, which enhanced its control of local society. Chapter three focuses on Communist propaganda activities. After exploring the Party’s different propaganda strategies towards various groups including ordinary peasants and collaborationist personnel, I argue that the key to its success lay in an effective combination of propaganda and organization. In chapter four, I detail how the Party utilized educational institutions as another channel of mass mobilization and further reinforced its penetration into various social groups. Chapter five uses Grain Tax, conscription and mobilization of anti-pacification campaign, all of which required personal sacrifice from the masses, as three instances to examine how effective the Communist mobilization was in local communities. The unprecedented development during the wartime also brought the Party inevitable problems, such as party members’ undesirable tendencies and misconduct and a gradually lessening control over lower administrators. How did the CCP deal with these issues? Chapter six explores the programs the Party launched to contain the undesirable tendencies and reinforce ideological indoctrination towards local cadres. On the basis of these investigations, I argue that the CCP had achieved considerable control over local society of the base areas in Jiangsu, which largely stemmed from its accommodation with preexisting cultural and social nexuses. Such accommodation facilitated the Communist mobilization for revenues, manpower and deconstruction of existing power networks in local communities. The Jiangsu experience thereby provided the Party with an alternate way of penetrating into local society in a moderate manner.



## **Chapter Two      Penetrating Local Society: from Economic to Political Struggle**

When China entered its Republican era, the government's attempt to build a modern state required a much larger amount of revenue, which pushed forward the state's institutional penetration to the lower level of administrations, especially below the county level. However, neither the Nanjing Nationalist government nor its Beiyang predecessor seemed successful on this issue. Previous scholarships show that quotidian administrative operations at lower levels, such as tax collection and civil dispute settlement, still largely relied on cooperation between government and influential elites in local communities. Li Huaiyin's study on Huailu County in the south-central Hebei plain, a core area of the North China "macroregion,"<sup>1</sup> convincingly argues for a cooperative model of government and autonomous local elite, in which the latter gradually formalized their roles in officialdom before the Resistance War. Such cooperation was achieved on the basis of common ends, shared identity and moral ethics, which further reinforced the solidarity of the communities (Li 2005). As for peripheral areas, Prasenjit Duara proposes the model of "state involution" arguing that the Republican government failed to develop a series of political and economic institutions that meshed with its aggressive local penetration, and thus had to rely on traditional measures of governance to fulfill its responsibilities in local communities. The state's incompetent control over its lower

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<sup>1</sup> William Skinner proposes a paradigm of "macroregion" to discuss the socioeconomic development in imperial China (Skinner 1964-1965). He divides the China proper into eight macroregions: North China, Northwest China, Lower Yangzi, Middle Yangzi, and Upper Yangzi, Southeast Coast, Lingnan, and Yun-Gui. According to Skinner, each macroregion includes core and peripheral areas. The core areas usually have dense population, more arable lands, stable and friendly natural environment and commercialized economy; the periphery is quite the opposite.

administrations thus created a group of people, known as “local bullies”, who partly replaced the role of traditional local gentry to function as the coordinator between the state and local communities. Excluded from the state payroll list, they exploited ordinary people to maximize their profits and thus, aroused public indignation against the state, which further weakened the authority of the state in local society (Duara 1988). In both cases, the quotidian administration at lower levels was realized by local powers, elite or bullies, both of which were not fully controlled by the state. How did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) enforce the penetration when encountering influential social powers in local communities in the base areas in Jiangsu?

Jiangsu Province is usually treated as the periphery of the Chinese Revolution for its better-off economic situation. Elizabeth Perry argues that rebellion or revolution more likely occurs in ecologically instable, poverty-stricken and economically undeveloped areas (Perry 1980). According to recent studies, however, better-off regions were not entirely revolution-proof in term of preexisting socioeconomic conditions. Philip Huang argues for the phenomenon of economic involution that had already begun in the Yangtze Delta even earlier than the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, people’s lives were not really improved because the output of agricultural and household handcraft production increased at the expense of incremental labor input, which meant the per capita income virtually shrank, regardless of the gross growth of economy, in this region (Philip Huang 1990, 11-16). The political segregation and frequent warfare prevented

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<sup>2</sup> Huang defines three types of economic growths: 1) involution, in which the pace of input, including money and labors, outweighs that of output; 2) intensification, in which the pace of input and output matches; 3) development, in which the marginal return of each workday increases.

the central government from paying too much attention to the issue of economic involution in local society. How did the CCP adjust its revolutionary agenda to accommodate such local settings?

Although scholars of China propose various explanations to the CCP's victory over the Nationalist government, they almost unanimously agree on the Party's controlling ability over local society. How was such control achieved during the War of Resistance? Chalmers Johnson asserts that the CCP took advantage of "peasant nationalism" aroused by the Japanese atrocities, responding to peasants' aspiration of resistance, and thereby, received cooperation from the latter to facilitate its penetration into local society (Johnson 1962). Tetsuya Kataoka attributed it to the optimum timing that the Communist troops were almost the only organized force in the north for the first two years of the War, which had saved the Party enough time to outcompete its opponents (Kataoka 1974, 9). Most importantly, the land program implemented before the outbreak of the War had nurtured plenty of Communist followers to strengthen the penetration when necessary, which has been highlighted by most studies about Communist base areas in north and northwest China (Selden 1971; 1995; Wou 1994; Keating 1997; Goodman 2000). Based on his research on central China, Chen Yung-fa uses the "controlled polarization" model to show how the Party stratified people into basic masses and feudal forces to maximize potential public support, and reformulated its class theory into an acceptable expression (Chen 1986, 11-13). How did the CCP approach the masses, deconstruct existing social power networks, penetrate into local communities and establish its own power basis in the base areas in Jiangsu?

While interested in the Party's strategies of mobilizing the masses, I also intend to highlight the significance of local settings in shaping the course of the Communist movement. Ralph Thaxton argues that peasants responded to the Party's call of the Resistance War because they regarded it as an opportunity for "survival that posed a direct threat to all outside political authority" (Thaxton 1983, 191). I concur with Thaxton in regard to the agency of the peasantry. Moreover, I show that the Party nurtured massive support, reinforced the penetration and built the political structure via negotiating with the existing cultural framework, including common values, popular habits, moral codes, and indigenous social networks of local communities. This was the essential reason that accounted for the success of the Communist mobilization.

In this chapter, I will first demonstrate how the Party designed specific strategies for specific targets. On the one hand, when faced with ordinary peasants, the mass workers (*minyun gongzuozhe*) initiated rent reduction movement to meet their desires of tangible benefits.<sup>3</sup> Thus, various resistance associations, especially the peasant resistance association, were widely organized as the Party's basic cells of later mobilization and control. On the other hand, the Party established local residency councils (*canyihui*) to promote its democratic image, and furthered to lubricate the relation with local gentry. Meanwhile, due to the widespread secret societies in this area, the mass workers attempted to infiltrate such organizations in order to bring them into the resistance cause. The Communist penetration was deepened and strengthened by the New Township

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<sup>3</sup> "Mass worker" is the term that the CCP used to refer to its members and cadres whose duties concerned with mobilizing and organizing the masses.

Renovation, which aimed at weakening traditional elite's political influence. Lastly, I will examine the effectiveness of the Party's infiltration by bringing up several issues that both local cadres and ordinary peasants encountered during the Party's penetration.

#### **ESTABLISHING THE PEASANT RESISTANCE ASSOCIATION**

Although Shanghai was the birth place of the CCP, the Communist movement was thoroughly eradicated during the purge in 1927 and had little spillover effect on the neighboring areas afterwards. Assuming that the plain-and-river topography of Jiangsu province was not suitable for guerrilla warfare that the Communist forces were good at, the New Fourth Army (NFA) entered this area with intense uncertainty. Relying on their experiences in the north and Jiangxi Province, the Communist mass workers decided to begin their mobilization with two major facets: on the one hand, they initiated campaigns that focused on peasants' most imminent economic requests; on the other hand, they tried to establish mass organizations as the basic cell of mobilization.

In the base areas of northern China, the Party usually relied on its existing administrative channel to register the masses and organize them into various associations. The advantage of this method resided in its efficiency of including and organizing people in favor of the Party's control over local society. However, in most cases the mass associations established under such stiff administrative interference only kept superficial frames while lacking internal motivation for further development (Rao Shushi 1942). Most importantly, administrative interference required pre-mobilization, such as the land reform in the north, as a prerequisite, which made it impossible to be imitated in Jiangsu Province.

There were basically two patterns of preliminary mobilization adopted in Jiangsu Province. One was a “top-down” pattern, which was pervasive in Huainan, Route East (ludong), and Route West (luxi) areas.<sup>4</sup> It usually began with the rent reduction campaign. Lacking wide-scale penetration, the Party and NFA authorities had to assign mass work teams or rent-judging committees (*pingzu weiyuanhui*) to take the initiative among peasants. Therefore, ordinary peasants were only followers and largely relied on the authority borrowed from the NFA for success. Through the campaign, peasant activists were discovered and mass associations were established in small scale. The Party’s experience in Anle Town was a good example of this type (Rao Shushi 1944).

The NFA firstly entered the Route East area in May 1939 and several mass workers were sent to Anle for preliminary mobilization in secret shortly thereafter. On January 10, 1940 they called a public gathering for publicizing the principle of “three to seven rent distribution” among ordinary peasants.<sup>5</sup> The next day the guerrillas arrested the biggest local landlord, Yuan Junhan, and accused him of collaboration with the Japanese. Although Yuan was released several days later, the masses certainly saw the hope of rent redistribution through the guerrilla’s tough attitude towards landlords and began to view the NFA as their powerful patron. In February the mass workers mobilized about 3,000 peasants to borrow grains from the biggest local landlords, Yuan and Zhu.

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<sup>4</sup> These areas were mainly located in the west Jiangsu and east Anhui province. Here “Route” means the Tianjin-Pukou railway that was open to traffic on 1912. Pukou is now a part of Nanjing, located in the north of the Yangtze River. The Tianjin-Pukou railway was the earliest part of the current Jinghu (Beijing to Shanghai) Railway.

<sup>5</sup> Here January refers to Chinese lunar calendar.

“Three to seven rent distribution” refers to the ratio of grain products that tenants and landlords received—30% for landlords and 70% for tenants.

Relying on the support of a NFA company stationed in town, the peasants successfully borrowed 1,000 *dan* grains.<sup>6</sup> The authority of the NFA was reinforced by their victory over the Nationalist force led by Qin Qingsen and Zhao Qiguo at the end of the same month. The peasants' hesitation that stemmed from the worry that the Nationalists would return was temporarily relieved. Mass associations and local military forces gradually came to form in this region (Rao Shushi 1944, 27-29).

The biggest disadvantage of the “top-down” pattern resided in its contingency on external military guarantee and outside cadres. Although the peasant, women, and youth resistance associations were established two years after the NFA entered the Route East, most of them were simply organizational frame without substantial activities. Some landlords and bullies took opportunities to obtain leadership of the mass associations and a few local party branches even became older clubs (*laoren julebu*)<sup>7</sup>. Rent redistribution had to be implemented by outside mass workers because of the lack of local cadres. However, since outside cadres usually were unfamiliar with local situations, their orders encountered indirect resistance from both tenants and landlords (Zhonggong ludong qu dangwei 1941). The outside cadres typically wore different clothes and had a different accent, which local peasants could hardly ignore. Besides, mass workers usually lived in the houses of rich peasants or even landlords upon their first arrival because of financial reasons. To some extent, this created an illusion to the public that they were closer to the local upper class than to the masses. Both facts reminded ordinary peasants that the mass

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<sup>6</sup> 1 dan = 75kg.

<sup>7</sup> It's a Chinese expression, which means a places where older people enjoy their lives.

workers were outsiders who represented another higher authority. Thus, the Party's mobilization only exerted superficial effect and its penetration experienced resilient resistance from the local community. The influence of the Party would soon vanish once the military guarantee was withdrawn.

The other was the "bottom-up" pattern based on the Party's successful experiences in north Jiangsu. Later the Huazhong Bureau tried to spread this pattern to other bases in central China. The "bottom-up" pattern emphasized the significance of mass organizations and insisted on their leading role in mass movement. First, a large amount of cadres composed of university graduates, guiding-team members from the NFA, and students of local party training classes were assigned to counties and districts as backbones of local peasant resistance associations. After arriving in their assigned places, they mobilized indigenes for attendance and initiated mass movements that were most closely related to the peasants' economic demands, such as rent reduction and grain borrowing, under the flag of the Peasant Resistance Association (Rao Shushi 1942, 19-20). The advantage of the "bottom-up" pattern stemmed from its insistence on the symbolic leading role of the Peasant Resistance Association, which caused the masses to easily identify themselves with it, and thus weakened potential resistance. Furthermore, functioning as the coordinator between the local government and the military force, the peasant association was able to most efficiently arrange resources. However, reliance on



the peasant association also led to blurring identification of local cadres, which caused institutional defects in the party administration.<sup>8</sup>

The success of this pattern relied on the success in a “key locality” (*mofan dian*), to which most manpower and supplies were invested. Typically a county required a working unit of thirty to forty cadres for initial mobilization. First of all, these cadres would rent a big building in the market town and hang a board on which “Preparation Committee of the County Peasant Resistance Association” was boldly written. They then would hang a billboard in the hall, on which the resolutions of the association, such as 25% rent reduction, half interest reduction, and improving wage workers’ living standards, were articulated. Meanwhile an investigative team was sent out for collecting information from the county's subordinative sub-districts, towns, and *baos*, based on which one or two key sub-districts would be selected.<sup>9</sup> Participating cadres were arranged in this way: four to five were left in the County Preparation Committee; each ordinary sub-district got a quota of three or four persons; twenty-three to four cadres were assigned to the key sub-district, where the working pattern and proportion of personnel arrangement were duplicated based on those at the county level. This model was also followed at township level. Usually each key sub-district had one or two key towns and each key town had two to three key *baos*, which usually consisted of big landlords and the largest number of tenants.

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<sup>8</sup> See later discussion in this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> *Bao* was an administrative unit of traditional Chinese government. It was also used in the Republican period for a couple of decades. Usually each *bao* consisted of fifty households.

The cadres who were assigned to the key *baos* interviewed each family individually and singled out tenants and wage workers as the major targets of potential members of the *Bao* Peasant Resistance Association and further mobilization. Then, the cadres came to the houses of these major targets, detailing the ideas of rent reduction for tenants and salary increment for wage workers. Meanwhile a *bao*-wide public gathering was convened to pass the resolutions that were discussed in the individual meetings beforehand, and elect syndics (*lishi*) of the *Bao* Peasant Associations. Ideally, cadres selected a landlord's house upon which the mobilized peasants would march in order to petition for rent reduction. Once succeeded, a *bao*-wide celebration would be held and people were asked to bring and knock on everything that could make sound. Thus, people of other *baos* would come to ask for details about what was happening and made resolution on their own to take action also. In the ordinary *baos*, only one cadre was left in the Preparation Committee Office. The rest conducted a ceremony, in which they would parade around the village carrying billboards on their shoulders. The whole process imitated the local ritual of “welcoming gods”, only except what was written on the billboards was the resolutions of the Peasant Association, not conventional warnings of “silence” (*sujing*) and “distance” (*huibi*). Their purpose was to familiarize peasants with these resolutions and await the success of the initial mobilization from the key *bao* for further action (Rao Shushi 1942, 20-25; Cao Diqu 1942, 256-257). This strategy worked effectively in Yancheng. One sub-district established twenty-seven *bao* and five township peasants associations, and another did forty-three and eight respectively in twenty days (Cao, 257-258).

The above description was the most ideal process of mobilization. Yet, the reality was not always as planned. In the “top-down” pattern, the NFA’s military strength convinced most peasants to implement the rent reduction program; while in the “bottom-up” pattern, the Communist troops and party authorities hid behind the peasant resistance association for stimulating the peasants’ spontaneous struggle fervor to the most extent. The latter did provide a better solution to the estrangement between local and outside cadres. For lacking support from higher authorities, however, the masses felt less secure and were reluctant to play tough card when facing the landlords. In Tuofeng Village (north Jiangsu) the masses did not dare to directly challenge the landlords in public struggle meetings; even the party members kept silent at party routine meetings (Zou Ping 1944b, 12). In Funing County, although the assigned mass workers successfully mobilized quite a few activists, these activists encountered indifference when they returned to their fellows for further mobilization (Liu Bin 1942, 130). Under such circumstances, the success of translating the Party’s political agenda into the masses’ economic requests played a key role in deciding whether the Party was able to penetrate local society through mass movements. Two campaigns that focused on grains—rent reduction and grain borrowing—were usually the most appealing ones to ordinary peasants, which functioned as the cut-in point for mass organization development.

#### **FOCUSING ON ECONOMIC REDISTRIBUTION: RENT REDUCTION AND GRAIN BORROWING**

Rent reduction program was a compromise under the second United Front between the GMD and the CCP that technically provided the latter with a legitimate

space of further development.<sup>10</sup> It was firstly proposed in the “ten principles of anti-Japanese and salvaging the country” (*kangri jiuguo shida gangling*) on Luochuan meeting in August 1937 but was not implemented until two years later. This program was a much more moderate version of the land reform that was enforced in Jiangxi Province and northern China before the outbreak of the War. It functioned as a valve of balance and control that kept the promise of material benefits to peasants on the one hand, and contained the landlords’ loss to their tolerable limit and secured their resistant stance against Japan on the other. To legitimize the rent reduction and minimize resistance from landlords, the Party traced its origin to the claims of Sun Yat-sen and the Chongqing Nationalist government’s wartime policy. They further equalized support for rent reduction to patriotic resistance against the Japanese, which turned the Party’s own agenda to the request of the whole country (Zeng Ruqing 1983, 147-148). Such propaganda helped the Party to establish its patriotic image in public. The actual process of mass mobilization, nevertheless, involved a much more complex negotiation and compromise.

First of all, the Party needed to help ordinary peasants break their psychological inferiority to landlords and convince them that they would be the biggest beneficiary of the rent reduction program at no cost. The most frequently adopted method was public struggle meetings (*douzheng dahui*) that pulled landlords down from the sacred niche in

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<sup>10</sup> It was also called 25% rent reduction, which required landlords to take 25% off from the rent of 1937. Meanwhile the highest rent rate could not exceed 37.5% of total output of the land. However, worrying such reduction would be too radical and push landlords to the side of Japanese and the GMD, the Party adopted 3-7 or 4-6 rent distribution (30% or 40% of output to landlords and 70% or 60% to tenants) in Jiangsu Province.

tenants' minds and used public humiliation, sometimes even violence, to force them to comply with the rent reduction policy and cooperate with the government. For instance, there was a landlord, Siye, in Sanzhuang Sub-district of Sishu County (north Jiangsu), who used to be an official in the Legal Department of the local government before the War, and thus, acted as the coordinator between the ordinary people and the authorities. After the NFA entered Sishu County, in the first year Siye successfully evaded rent reduction by relying on his previous prestige among the tenants. However, he was made a major target by the mass workers in the fall of 1943. On the day of the public struggle meeting, more than five hundred peasants convened on the village playground. Once the pre-arranged tenants took the leading role to expose Siye's plots against reduction, numerous attacks from the masses that used to be suppressed by his power erupted. Intimidated by the public rage showed by the participants, Siye recognized his violation against rent reduction and promised to compensate the tenants.<sup>11</sup>

Once the masses was agitated, even current residency council members could be the target of such meetings. In the fall of 1944, Wang Jiying, one of the biggest landlords in Sheyang County (north Jiangsu) and the deputy president of the local Residency Council (*canyihui*), was required to attend a public meeting which meant to solve the conflicts between him and his seventeen tenant families. Surprisingly, almost three thousand people came to the gathering. The tenants accused Wang of cheating the government on rent reduction and exploiting them as free labors. Wang's defense was

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<sup>11</sup> Dongliu, "Sishu sanzhuang qu shiyan xiang de jianzu douzheng" (The rent reduction struggle in Shiyan Town of Sanzhuang Sub-district in Sishu), *Huaihai bao*, 25 November 1943.

interrupted several times by the tenants, who enumerated their complaints one by one. Finally even the town chief had to step out, apologizing for his negligence on Wang's perfunctory attitude toward the rent reduction policy. The public gathering ended with the compromise that Wang refunded the rent that should have been deducted in the previous years and paid the tenants for their extra labor. For the sake of the United Front, the chairman of the meeting contained tenants' rage and avoided further assault against Wang (Liu Bochao 1984).<sup>12</sup>

Public gatherings created an environment of collective action, in which the participants were less responsible for the aftermath of their behaviors and once agitated, blindly followed others. It was also the most effective way to build ordinary peasants' self-confidence vis-à-vis the landlord class. Besides public gatherings, small-scale colloquia and training classes targeting on specific objectives were also widely adopted. Although the general guideline of mass mobilization was to translate political agenda into economic request, meeting organizers took advantage of the relatively closed environment to perpetuate their ideological education. The local cadres started with the question of "who fed whom" to introduce the Party's class principle, then the current warfare with Japan which, they insisted, would end in favor of China, and the ultimate victory of the CCP over the GMD (Cao Diqui 1944b, 231). It was wise for the Party to limit intensive ideological infiltration to small scale meetings for better controlled effect and manipulation, and focus on economic benefits at public gatherings because this

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<sup>12</sup> Also in Ping, "Ji zhudian jianzu jiufen zhongcai dahui" (Report on the judgment meeting of landlord-tenant rent conflicts), *Yanfu bao*, 28 September 1944.

deployment easily aroused collective hatred in the masses and helped the Party achieve its goals.

In addition to a great number of meetings that the CCP was famous for, personal relationships were another way in which peasants were mobilized in the fight for rent reduction. In terms of the landlord-tenant relationship, the worse the landlords treated their tenants, the more resolute the tenants were when implementing rent reduction; the less land one rented, the more indifferent he showed towards the reduction policy. Generally speaking, bigger tenants inclined to firmly support rent reduction since they benefited more once the campaign succeed (Zou Ping 1944c, 26-28). It also explained that the mass workers of Subei Regional Base usually regarded the ratio of tenants to landlords as the key standard to select “key locality” for initial mobilization. Furthermore, mass workers often reported and took advantage of conflicting opinions on rent reduction within a family. In some cases, such a divergence occurred in tenant families that did not dare to request decreased rent from their landlords but begrudged others who had benefited from the campaign. Usually it was the elder generation who opposed reduction while their children were in favor of it. The local cadres thus encouraged the children to convene all family members and struggle against their parents. The higher authorities regarded it as a good way to minimize resistance of tenants and push forward the rent reduction program (Cao Diqu 1944b, 232). Here one can find that the Party also utilized various kinds of conflicts among neighbors and families to encourage mutual struggle and surveillance in the communities, through which it obtained the first-hand knowledge of the movement's development. As such the

traditional values of a peaceful reciprocal relationship within a neighborhood and respect towards elders within family were gradually weakened. People were encouraged to be loyal only to the social organizations to which they belonged. This was a new value that the Party intended to implant into people's mindsets and further facilitated its penetration.

The rent reduction campaign not only endangered the landlords' economic interest but more importantly, it challenged the authority of the traditional elite in local communities, which survived the vicissitude of dynasties and the 1911 Revolution. Therefore, the resistance from landlords was much more intense. Some landlords threatened their tenants: "cloudy days are not as many as sunny ones, and west wind will come after east wind;" "the NFA will leave ultimately and I will clear our debt once the Nationalist troops returns;" "if you insist on reduction, I will report to the Japanese." Some intimidated the tenants with rumors, "those families who benefited from rent reduction would have to join the NFA and the government is going to implement the 3-3-4 (30% for tenants, 30% for the government and 40% for landlords) distribution on land outputs." Other landlords pretended to withdraw the leased lands by excuses of selling out or impawning them, or insisted the tenants write reduction certification as evidence for their future revenge (Cao Diqu 1944b, 233-234).

Indirect soft persuasion was another widely adopted resistance of the landlords who kept good relationships with their tenants. They offered various benefits for not decreasing rent: some suggested half-half distribution and volunteered to take the responsibility to pay the Grain Tax; some promised help during famine seasons; and some renewed ten-year, twenty-year, or lifetime leases with tenants, which included extra



labor fees. They also tried to avoid rent reduction by noting previous favors they had provided: “we have kept our landlord-tenant relation for years, and let us be honest and fair: how many years have your family depended on me? You will not be able to make a living without me” (Cao, 233-234; Chen Pixian 1942, 114-115)! The most pervasive solution to evade reduction was to force tenants to temporarily increase rent at the rate that exactly compensated the landlords’ loss in the movement.

The landlords’ soft persuasion targeted local cadres as well. They took advantage of the Party’s urge to develop local Peasant Resistance Associations, hiring poor tenants to pretend to be activists and attend the association. Some tried to bribe local cadres by gifts, money, inviting them to dinner or even offering marriage proposal to their families (Liu Shaoqi 1941a). For instance, a landlord in Shapugang (north Jiangsu) tried to marry his daughter to a local cadre, Hu, and use the in-law relation to evade rent reduction. However, Hu refused his request. Such bribery was so prevalent in Jiangsu that some local authorities, such as the Fudong County committee, ordered that cadres were not allowed to have meals at landlords’ homes or accept any gifts (Hong Haiquan 1984a).

Although the rent reduction movement was an economic issue on the surface, it actually functioned as the first nail to breach the balanced societal order that had kept the peace of local society for centuries. Such an order was so stable that both landlords and tenants considered it unchangeable regardless of its fairness. Therefore, what landlords lost was not merely 25% of the rent, but more importantly the social authority, privileges and resources they enjoyed. There was no doubt that they manipulated all possible channels to resist the movement. In addition, ordinary people’s inertia for life, fear of

change, and lack of confidence towards the CCP made the Party suffer from a joint resistance from both landlords and tenants. This was not a rare phenomenon. Some social scientists have shown the quotidian operations in a moral economic entity in premodern agricultural society, in which landlords and tenants formed a benevolent, humane and reliable patron-client relationship based on mutual aids, obligations and shared moral codes, especially the subsistence ethics (Scott 1976). In a stable ecological environment like places in Jiangsu, this bond between landlords and tenants was not easily broken if patron's guarantee for subsistence of peasants was not withdrawn. Hence, the rent reduction was a continuous routine movement that was mobilized during each harvest throughout the War of Resistance. Although suitable strategies were important, a long-lasting Communist government provided the most stability in tenants' minds. Here is the data of the rent reduction result during the War (Table 1).

Table 1: Rent reduction date of Yejing village (Suzhong Regional Base)

Year		1941	1942	1943	1944
<b>Harvest percentage (household)</b>	75%	8	6	6	20
	80%	3	12	12	2
	85%	2	5	7	4
	90%	5	2	2	2
	95%	0	0	1	1
<b>Not deducted (household)</b>		15	8	5	4
<b>Gained from reduction (dan) *</b>		8.98	15.4	16.2	19.1

Source: Wang, Jun et al. "Yejing cun de jianzu diaocha" (Rent reduction investigation of Yejing village), *Suzhong Bao*, 10 August 1945.

\*1 *dan* = 75kg

The five-year mass movement and the stable governance of the CCP in the bases of Jiangsu made the landlord class fall from the patron status in the minds of local peasants.

A peaceful and harmonious patron-client relationship between landlords and tenants was no longer like it used to be before the War.

Instead of completely destroying the patron-client relationship, the Party strenuously attempted to replace landlords in local communities to become the new benevolent patron who offered philanthropic assistance to maintain the subsistence of ordinary peasants. The grain borrowing campaign was implemented to fulfill this function and publicize the Party's image of representing the masses. In order to minimize discontent from landlords and rich peasants, which might endanger their support to the NFA and resistance against Japan, the Party intended to limit its scale and avoided pervasive mobilization. The local Peasant Resistance Association was responsible for the campaign and the local government merely played a coordinating role between the lender and the borrower. The Party further prescribed that there should not be specifically targeted landlords or preset grain amounts of the campaign and the borrowed grain should be returned before the agreed due date with affordable interest. One internal party document suggested that the mass workers should conduct a detailed investigation before the campaign and the poorest families who were absolutely incapable of repayment should be excluded from the borrowers (Xu Bu 1942). However, what actually occurred in local communities sometimes turned out to be the very opposite of the Party's guidelines. Here is the story of a grain borrowing campaign in Huaibao County (north Jiangsu) in the spring of 1942.

The town of Suijing experienced a severe famine that year and the Peasant Association estimated a shortage of at least 1,000 *dan* of grain for the relevant families.

However, the landlords and rich peasants only volunteered to provide around one fourth of the needed food. Some were not willing to lend out their stock without official permit, afraid to be accused of usury later during interest reduction movement. Under such circumstances, the local Peasant Association turned to the masses to collect information about the four big landlords' stocks and organized activists into a representative group to spy on the objectives. The group then visited the four landlords to inquire about the amount they could afford to lend out. After a two-day negotiation, the biggest landlord, Zhang Ruhe, was willing to raise the amount from 25 to 100 *dans*, and the other three from 20 to 80 *dans*, which they thought would meet the request of the Peasant Association. However, the representatives claimed, "we do not dare to say yes, you tell the masses tomorrow yourselves!"

On the third day, a small-scale public meeting was held for further negotiation and the four landlords were forced to attend under the supervision of the Peasant Association. They promised to increase the lending amount to 350 *dans* under public pressure, which yet met the participants' anticipation. The negotiation reached an impasse and the Peasant Association thus announced a town-wide struggle meeting the next day. In the afternoon, the association cadres held a meeting to discuss the process of the next day gathering. They got the message that the four landlords should have around 600 *dans* grain in stock at home and a couple of hundreds in other grain storages. In order to collect evidence, they came to a small landlord, Liu Quanfu, and asked him to pretend to send his grains into the storage where the big four landlords hid their stocks. As a returned favor, Liu was allowed to lend out only 10 *dans* of grain.

The town-wide public gathering was held in the morning of the fourth day but the impasse continued until noon. Someone suggested, “We had to treat these landlords with meat and wine when they came to us for debt in previous harvest seasons. Today they should treat us in return!” This suggestion was echoed by the masses. The director of the Peasant Association thus called the masses to eat at the four landlords’ home and soon the parade flooded into Zhang Ruhe’s grain storage. Zhang rushed to the government for help but was declined. Under such circumstances, the big four landlords were forced to agree on the amount proposed by the Peasant Association. After that, the association cadres revealed their grain stocks outside their home and the director thus decided to confiscate these hidden stocks. Deterred by the four landlords’ experiences, families that had surpluses volunteered to offer whatever the Peasant Association requested. Eventually 1,600 *dans* were borrowed in the whole town, which was 60% more than the original target, and 500 *dans* were thus turned in to the sub-district for other use (Huang Xuming 1984).

The campaign of Suijin was far from an extreme case and at least nobody got hurt. In the Town of Hebei (central Jiangsu) physical conflict occurred between the landlords and the peasant association cadres, and the Sub-district Committee had to step out to suppress the conflict by arresting the landlords’ followers (Gu Naiyu and Zhou Xiyuan 1983). Such deviation from the Party’s original guidelines aroused the vigilance of the Huazhong Bureau. In the report on the grain borrowing campaign of Yanfu District, it criticized the local trend of turning individual negotiation into pervasive mass campaign. It recorded the decreased output of rich peasants and the unease of middle

peasants, both of which stemmed from the borrowing campaign that endangered the security of private properties. Even badly, the campaign betrayed the Party's basic principle of minimizing enemy groups and enlarged the scale of attacked objectives to rich peasants or better-off middle peasants, causing their uncertainty towards the CCP (Huazhong ju 1942b). This phenomenon was not confined to Jiangsu. In northern China both landlords and peasants ran into the Japanese occupied areas for unsecure property protection and personal persecution led by the Party's over-leftist policies on rent and grain (Kataoka 1974, 134-135). The deviation apparently resulted from the local cadres' misunderstanding of the policy of higher authorities and their lack of overarching conceptual framework of the Communist movement. For local cadres, the grain borrowing campaign was an assigned task that needed to be fulfilled and would negatively impact their career otherwise. It was also an opportunity for them to establish their personal authority and increase their social status in local communities. Since they were the executants who actually turned the Party's abstract policies into realities, the local cadres played a deciding role in the result of the Party's control over the society.

Regardless of the various methods that local cadres adopted in the rent reduction and grain borrowing movements, a general framework of the basic cell of mass associations and local party branches were gradually established (see Table 2 and 3).

Table 2: Peasant Associations in Yanfu District (till July 1941)

County		Yancheng	Funing	Liandong	Huai'an	Sum
Number of members	association	80,000	60,000	15,000	5,000	160,000
Association numbers	District level	NA	NA	NA	NA	200
	Town	184	109	22	8	423
	Bao	1,000	639	170	36	1,846
	Group	5,257	3,050	846	300	9,462

1. Source: Based on Liu, Bing, "Yanfu qu gongzuo baogao" (Working report of yanfu district), in *Subei kangri genjudi* (Subei anti-Japanese base), Zhonggong Jiangsu sheng dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui, and Jiangsu sheng dang'an guan ed. (Beijing: Zhongguo dangshi ziliao press, 1989), 125-126.

2. Among the peasant association members, 70% came from poor peasants, 15% from middle peasants, 5% from wage workers, 5% from rich peasants, and 5% from others (Ibid.).

Table 3: Party members and branches distribution in Yanfu District (till July 1941)

County		Funing	Fudong	Jianyan	Yanchen	Yandong	Liandong	Huang'an	Front area
No. of members	CCP	1,232	339	730	477	795	687	283	118
No. of Party branches (Sub-district/Township levels)	Party	72	30	39	44	45	37	NA	NA
No. of Party groups (village level)	Party	255	NA	116	112	116	NA	NA	NA

1. Source: Based on Liu, Bing, "Yanfu qu gongzuo baogao" (Working report of yanfu district), in *Subei kangri genjudi* (Subei anti-Japanese base), Zhonggong Jiangsu sheng dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui, and Jiangsu sheng dang'an guan ed. (Beijing: Zhongguo dangshi ziliao press, 1989), 133-135.

2. Professional background of these party members: 15 factory workers, 119 handcraft workers, 189 hired hands, 2,738 poor peasants, 724 middle peasants, 48 rich peasants, 5 landlords, 10 independent labors, 4 store assistants, 18 free professionals, 71 school teachers, 23 merchants.

Educational background: 16 college students, 11 advanced normal school students, 24 normal school students, 174 high and middle school, 150 senior and junior elementary school students, 23 educated from other channels (Ibid.).

Besides Peasant Association, workers, youngsters, students, women, and teachers followed the peasants and formed their own organizations. A rapid increasing membership in the first couple of years was, however, more a growing number than an indication of substantial control over the masses. The working report on the mass

associations of Yanfu District recorded that only 20% of the local Peasant Association could fulfill their routine organizational responsibilities; about 50% relied on the town and *bao* cadres to take initiative and the subordinate executive groups (*gongzuo xiaozhu*) did not function at all; and the other 30% existed merely as frameworks (Liu Bin 1942, 125-133). Some local cadres tried to establish their personal authority by relying on the new identity. One *bao* head in Sishu County convened a public gathering to condemn the masses simply because he was challenged by the peasants in public for his unfairness in assigning corvee obligation several days before.<sup>13</sup> These phenomena suggested that although higher party authorities endeavored to build new institutions to facilitate its penetration, the local cadres and party member recruited for this task viewed their responsibilities differently. As shown in the case in Sishu, the *bao* head took advantage of his official position to reinforce personal authority when faced with challenges. These local cadres considered their new identity merely as a replacement of the traditional elites and appeared to be more interested in building their personal prestige. The entire course of the wartime Communist movement in Jiangsu was full of such tension of disaccordant perceptions between the Party's higher authorities and the local cadres. The CCP's control over them and their effectiveness of implementing the party policies decided the result of the wartime Communist movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Yimin, "Zhangxu de gongzuo weishenme laoshi gaobuhao ne?" (Why could not the mass work in Zhangxu be developed?), *Huaihai bao*, 1 September 1944.



### **RESIDENCY COUNCIL—A PLACEBO FOR THE LOCAL GENTRY**

When the NFA and the CCP first entered Jiangsu, they intentionally encouraged leftist policies, such as rent-interest reduction, to win over massive support, and more importantly, to deconstruct the prestige of local gentry and traditional power infrastructure. However, as the last section shows, the misunderstanding of the local cadres and the weak link between county and lower administrations demonstrated the Party's inability to contain the over-leftist inclination during mass mobilization. The Jiangxi experiences in the early 1930s had taught the CCP leaders a lesson that support from peasants alone was far from enough to contest state power with the GMD. The decision of the intermediate elements, i.e. petty and national bourgeoisie, rich peasants, and small landlords, was of significance for the ultimate victory (Kui-Kwong Shum 1988, 13-14). Hence, the CCP issued various policies in the name of the United Front to appease the traditional elite while attacking their power networks.

It was in March 1940 that the “three third” principle was proposed within the Party and four months later Mao Zedong announced it nationwide. In order to institutionally realize the United Front policy and minimize potential opposition, the “three third” principle prescribed the compositions of Party's administrative and consultative organs: one third from party members, one third from non-party leftists, and the other one third from intermediate elements (Mao Zedong 1940). It was not until the April of next year that the Huazhong Bureau began to implement this policy in Jiangsu. The first step was to create local residency council (*canyihui*) as a consultative organ that invited local elites' participation in administrative affairs of the Communist government

at all levels. Though claimed to be democratic, the council members were mostly assigned or hired by the corresponding government. In the front areas where local gentry were influential, the residency council also functioned as a semi-administrative organ (Liu Ruilong 1942, 299-300).

For those landlords who were attacked as the major target of the first round of leftist movement upon the NFA's arrival, the establishment of the local residency council served as a timely opportunity for them to regain the lost authority under the Communist governance. When the First Residency Council of Tai County commenced, a picture of Sun Yat-sen was hung in the meeting hall, which implied the Party's legitimacy as Sun's heir and weakened its Communist image. Landlords and petty intellectuals, such as local middle and elementary school principals, became the major forces that the Party intended to win over (Xu Guanbo 1985). At the residency council meeting at county level, local gentry thus found a platform to express their opinions and complaints on local issues, such as rent-interest reduction, conscription, great production movement, military-dependent aid program, Grain Tax collection, and so on (Sun Yanfeng and Chen Qingquan 1985; Shi Chao 1991). In this sense, the Party considered the "three-third" principle and Residency Council as a placebo to alleviate doubts and uncertainty of landlords aroused by some ultra-leftist actions of the local cadres.

More importantly, this institution provided a legitimate channel through which party cadres were able to get in touch with powerful local gentry and indoctrinate their ideology to them. The first Provisional Residency Council of Yanfu District was held in October 1942 when most subordinate counties had established their councils. It thus was

able to convene most prestigious gentry of north Jiangsu, such as Pang Youlan, Ji Yuting, Wang Jiying, etc., in its presence.<sup>14</sup> Before the District Council actually commenced, a two-day symposium was held for opinion exchange and mutual understanding between the two parties. Pang accused the Peasant Association cadres of their disrespectful attitude toward him simply due to his landlord identity. One landlord from Huai'an County complained about the ultra-leftist actions in the rent reduction and wage increasing movements and further revealed that some peasants even use their raised wage and exempted rent to gamble. Some small landlords, who suffered the most in the rent reduction movement, took this opportunity to plead for a moderate reduction rate. The grain borrowing campaign received the most intensive scrutinies from the gentry. They grumbled that the local cadres disregarded peasants' actual demands and landlords' affordability. Some participants even incisively accused the creation of residency council of a puppet that was manipulated by the local government (Yanfu qu canyihui choubai qian de yici ge jieceng renshi zuotanhui 1986).

The participants from the mass associations firmly denied these accusations by charging the landlords as the very spark that ignited the ultra-leftist actions. As the highest-ranking Party official who participated in the symposium, Chen Yi wisely evaded any judgment over the conflicts between local peasant cadres and gentry, and redirected the participants' focus from mutual accusations to this unprecedented occasion, in which the participants from various backgrounds were able to freely express their opinions

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<sup>14</sup> Pang was over seventy by then and a *ju ren* (one who passed the provincial civil service exam and qualified for official position) of the Qing dynasty; Ji and Wang were the biggest landlords in Funing County. And this Wang Jiying was the one who later was struggled in public for landlord-tenant dispute (mentioned in the last section).

(Chen Yi 1942b). His citation from Confucian classics and self-calling of “brother” (*xiongdi*) further shortened the psychological distance between him and the present gentry, and changed their conventional impressions of Communist cadres as rude and illiterate. Gregor Benton’s study on the NFA convincingly demonstrates that Chen Yi’s personal charisma is an imperative reason for the success of the United Front policy in central China (Benton 1999).

In his research of the United Front based on north China, Tetsuya Kataoka argues that the “three third” principle and the residency council institution functioned differently in the Communist base areas and the GMD controlled regions. In the latter the Party intentionally promoted its “democratic” image by propagandizing these policies in contrast to the GMD’s “dictatorship” while in the base areas the policies pushed land revolution to a new stage (Kataoka 1974, 242-244). The situations in Jiangsu were convincing to demonstrate that the propagandistic function was widely spread and effective also in the Communist bases. However, the most important effect of the residency council institution did not reside in the redistribution of land, as Kataoko claims, but that of political power. It eradicated the power base of local gentry while confining their discontent to a controllable spectrum. It further smoothed the transition from the traditional *bao-jia* system to the Party’s later New Township institution.

When the residency council institution first took effect in 1941, higher authorities and the local government assigned most participating members. Paralleling the Party’s deepening penetration, relevant articles that prescribed the electoral process,

responsibilities, functions and jurisdiction gradually came to a mature form at local level.

The Election Articles of the Suzhong Regional Base stipulated:

The ratio of representatives to residents is about 1 to 60 in town and each township residency council should consist of 20-40 representatives; sub-district representatives should be elected from the subordinate township representatives and the number should be confined to 40-70; the county residency council members come from its subordinate sub-district ones and range from 120 to 180 depending on the population of the county.

Three to five members (including the president and the deputy of the council) are elected to comprise the Standing Committee (*changzhu weiyuanhui*), taking care of routine responsibilities when the county residency council is closed.

According to the stipulations, the residency council was entitled to:

- 1) Elect and dismiss the administrative committee and the president of the same level, and council members of the superior ranking;
- 2) Discuss, supervise and approve the working reports and plans, policies and budget of the administrative organs;
- 3) Discuss and implement all the orders and directions of the higher authorities;
- 4) Act as surveillance on the administrative organs and staff at the same level;
- 5) Supervise and discuss the proposals of the mass associations;
- 6) Compose working report to the masses on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, “the township council members were elected every half year, and the sub-district and county ones once a year.” The regular meeting system stipulated that the “township residency council convened routine meetings once a month, sub-district one once every two months, and county one once every half year.” Most importantly, the Residency Council was responsible for electing an Administrative Committee (*zhixing*

*weiyuanhui*), the members of whom held official positions in the Communist government (Suzhong qu xingzheng weiyuanhui 1943).

The Administrative Committee was an important organ for the Party to establish close coordinative relation with influential gentry and expand its political impact on the upper class. However, most targeted gentry evaded positions of the Administrative Committee and would rather be elected in the Standing Committee since they intended to keep certain distance from the CCP in case the Nationalist government would return to power in the future while retaining their influence on the Communist government at the same time. As a result, the local administrative committee members were usually middle or small landlords and intellectuals who hardly met the Party's expectation of expanding and strengthening its political influence. In this sense, the Residency Council provided a suitable platform for the local gentry to find their own ways of maintaining status quo and resisting the Communist penetration.

Although previous studies view the residency council institution as a concession to neutral powers, my research on Jiangsu province convinces me that the Party was still capable of manipulating the council through internal educations and detailed plans. In the instance of the Second Residency Council of Huaihai District held in 1942, there were 229 participants covering most social classes, among which about 40% (90 members) were party members, much higher than the "three third" principle stipulated.<sup>15</sup> For this

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<sup>15</sup> Among them, 25 came from military force, 48 came from landlords and gentry, 15 were merchants, and 6 came from middle and higher schools. In addition, there were 16 elementary school teachers, 16 youngsters, 16 women, 16 workers, 40 peasants, and 2 fishermen. Altogether, 29 of them were invited by the government. Among the 29 invited, 13 people came from landlords and gentry group (Li Yimang 1942, 221).

violation, the Party reasoned in its working report that some party members' identities were hidden in secret, and thus there was no way to precisely control the percentage in the local election (Li Yimang 1942, 221-222). During the meeting, the Party tried to win middle and elementary school teachers' supports through proposals that raised their salaries and welfares, significantly higher than their expectations, and promoted social and civic education programs. In return, the Party gained their unanimous support on the financial and grain proposals, and all the votes in the later election (227).

When it came to the phase of election, detailed and sophisticated arrangements were much more decisive. According to the election rules of Huaihai District, one group of party members, one of gentry and merchants, and one of workers, peasants, youth, women and students respectively nominated one third of the candidates. Half of them would be assigned as Standing or Administrative Committee members through final election. To avoid redundant nomination and compose a candidate list that ostensibly covered all social groups while actually favoring the CCP, the Party usually proposed its list after the gentry group had turned in theirs. Furthermore, to ensure that party members would have at least one third of the positions on the two committees, the Party deliberately disregarded the number set by the "three third" principle when composing the list. They preferred to later resign if the elected party members exceeded the one third limit. In addition, since a significant fraction of the workers, peasants, and party members were illiterates, the Party would select several leaders among the two groups and the members only needed to follow whatever the leaders circled on the votes. Finally, in order to maintain its democratic image and cover the traces of manipulation, the Party

carefully arranged the distribution of the votes, avoiding concentration on the candidates who they supported. Pro-party votes were given to those candidates who were unpopular among the gentry but had to be elected in favor of the Party's penetration. Those who might get supports from all three groups received less assistance of such. Or the Party focused their votes on the most important three fourths of the candidates and kept the rest one fourth unattended (229-231). It thus is safe to conclude that the Party still had enough channels to control the Residency Council even if the "three third" principle was reinforced.

To sum up, I have outlined four functions of the residency council institution, which contributed to the Party's penetration in Jiangsu. First of all, it created a platform on which the local gentry were willing to communicate and keep a corporative relationship with the CCP, and gradually accepted it as a legitimate administration. One landlord of Yanfu even bluffed, "Nowadays the county magistrate and I would sit together and talk" (Liu Bin 1942, 131). Second, it publicized the Party's democratic image in contrast to the GMD's dictatorship, and embedded it into people's minds. One landlord in Anle cheerfully stated, "Now [the CCP] implemented democratic [policies], and we [landlords] have a share of the 'three third' government" (Rao Shushi 1944, 31). Third, it restrained the ultra-leftist inclination of the peasant movement and largely mitigated the landlords' panic that otherwise might have harmed the resistance activities against Japan. Li Yimang, the Party Committee Deputy of Huaihai District, admitted that it was hard to make local peasant cadres follow what they were arranged on the meetings in daily operations (Li Yimang 1942, 226). Thus, the residency council to some extent



curtailed the peasants' radical fanaticism by re-offering the local gentry partial power of speech in local administration. Last, it undermined the power base of the local gentry in a moderate way that they were barely aware of. Their authority in local society no longer relied on their wealth, prestige, or coordinative function between the government and the masses, but on the patronage of the Party. It thus was reasonable to find that Wang Jiying, the former Deputy of the County Residency Council in 1942, was struggled in public for landlord-tenants disputes in 1944.

#### **EXTENDING CONNECTION IN THE SECRET SOCIETIES: PAROCHIAL MOBILIZATION**

Perry observes that a stable and solidary community spontaneously formed local protective force in the form of militia, guild or secret society when encountering instabilities and outside invasions in Huaibei plain. Such local power sometimes served as mediation between the state and the society to sustain a power balance (Perry 1980, 80-94). This observation was equally valid when applied to the wartime Jiangsu. The existence of secret societies, for local security or business conveniences, was quite pervasive upon the CCP's arrival. To take Huaihai District as an example, almost all the counties had Big Sword Association (*dadao hui*), whose members ranged from 300 to 1,000 people. In a sum, there were about 4,000 people currently engaging in secret societies (Jin Ming 1942, 164). This was just the number of the registered members, not including the disciples they recruited. Besides Big Sword Association, popular religious associations, such as *yiguan dao* and *xiantian dao*, were also a powerful force which had at least hundreds of members in one county (Zhang Weicheng 1945). They consisted of the third kind of social force that the Party had to face during their penetration.

Although China had entered its third decade of the Republic, traditional values and daily rituals did not change as rapidly as political institutions. Confucian thoughts that embraced the ideas of loyalty (*zhong*) and righteousness (*yi*) was still deeply embedded in people's minds.<sup>16</sup> The local cadres understood that a mechanical transplant of Communist ideology would not take effect and they had to rely on their local knowledge to gradually transform the society. Hence, they sometimes resorted to traditional rituals in the preliminary mobilization even for ordinary peasants. For instance, the mass workers of the Taixing-Dongtai-Xinghua area organized a ritual of killing chicks and drinking blood wine to reinforce the fraternal connection among the members of the mass associations (Liankang diqu dang zuzhi de jianshe he qunzhong gongzuo 1988). For quite a long time peasants of Rudong County misunderstood the Peasant Resistance Association as the “dragon king association” (*longwang hui*, a local popular gathering) and brought joss sticks each time when attending the meeting (Cui Zhengping et al. 1984).

When the local cadres attempted to approach members of the secret societies, their reliance on traditional cultural norms and rituals was even more pervasive. The Party generally regarded most secret societies as peasants' self-defendant associations against assaults from the Japanese and bandits. Although local gentry, especially big landlords, took the leading role in such forces, the majorities were still ordinary peasants

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<sup>16</sup> To promote a new culture in accordance with the republican institution, Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu (they both were Beijing University faculty then) and other new fashioned intellectuals initiated the May Fourth new culture movement from 1919, which severely criticized Confucianism and classical Chinese and encouraged using vernacular in favor of popular education. However, the influence of the new culture movement was limited to urban areas, especially big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, and hardly touched rural regions.

who could be persuaded to involve into the Communist movement (Hua Yang 1985; Jiang Weiqing 1985). Thus, according to the United Front policy, the local cadres began the probing communications with the secret society leaders. They openly affirmed their support for the Big Sword Association's claim of protecting hometown against bandits, and encouraged a mutual intelligence exchange. The head of Xiangbei Sub-district (central Jiangsu), Yang Ming, took the initiative to make friends with some local secret society leaders and helped to recover their organizations. Such friendly gestures earned the supports from these local leaders, who opened their monthly meeting to propaganda of the Party's policies and ideologies (Shi Sheng 1983). In addition, the Party kept an open mind to the religious conventions and rituals of the secret societies and helped to solve their living hardships (Fan Zhengfu 1987b). Meanwhile, the Party also took the chance to transform their parochial ideology to nationalist resistance against Japan. Once entering the Jiangdu-Gaoyou-Baoying area, the NFA officers paid visits to the leaders of *Lianzhuang* Association and Big Sword Association, reaffirming their welcome if they were willing to join the NFA for the resistance cause against Japan. All the different ideological claims between the two parties were put aside and only collaboration with Japan was firmly prohibited (Jiang Weiqing 1985).

Another method of penetration was to join local secret societies in a secret or open manner and expand Communist influence through recruiting disciples. For instance, in the Subei Regional Base, the district committee arranged two mass workers to become the disciples of the eldest generation of the *Anqing* Association, the most powerful local secret society, through special social connections. Carrying the double identities of the

elder generation secret society leaders and the CCP cadres, they set out for the front areas and the Japanese occupied regions to recruit disciples. Many collaborationist town and *bao* heads volunteered to worship them as the master since the master-disciple relationship served as a perfect cover for their communications with the CCP (Li Wenda 1982). Such penetration was so successful that the Party was able to control the middle and lower infrastructure of the secret societies. Tens of the *biao* heads of *Xiantiandao* were party members or activists till 1945 (Bao Houchang and Zhang Zhuoru 1988).<sup>17</sup>

To establish the party patronized associations on the basis of local secret society customs was the creation of the Party's United Front work in Jiangsu. The *Xinsheng* Association in the Suzhong Regional Base, the *Huzhu* Association in the Sunan Regional Base and the *Zhongyi* Association north of the Yangtze River were all of this kind. It was regarded as an alternate method of organizing mass associations in the front areas or the Japanese occupied regions. Its recruiting objectives included gangsters, hooligans, collaborationist military and administrative personnel, landlords and gentry, and the next generation of the secret society leaders of the occupied regions (Chen Yutian 1987). In those places where the Japanese surveillance was not strict, the Party divided their members into groups on the basis of village, assigned one or two group leaders and announced secret routine meeting once every one or two months. In order to conform to the secret society conventions, the local cadres attended the meetings under the identity of "uncle" (*yeshu*) or "little boss" (*xiao laoda*) (Wang Yunlong 1983). In the Party's own

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<sup>17</sup> *Xiantiandao* was an influential secret society featured with popular religion in south Jiangsu, and *biao* was its basic unit.

secret societies, the mass workers did not have to act in the secret society fashion while the recruited members were still forced to behave themselves by the conventional master-disciple relation of this culture. After being educated and observed for months, some activists would be admitted to the Party.

The policy towards the secret society was accordant with the principle of the United Front, i.e. to appeal to various classes and minimize the number of enemies. Its most pragmatic purpose was to weaken resistance from the collaborationist forces. Thanks to its moderation and flexibility, the Party was able to get intelligence reports from the collaborationist town and *bao* heads who wished to keep options open for their future. More importantly, viewing the GMD as its ultimate opponent, the Party regarded its communications with the secret societies as an imperative channel to penetrating into the social group that its other policies were not able to attend. Thus, the Party was more interested in gaining their support by embracing parochialism and traditional secret society culture instead of actually converting them to communism.

When infiltrating inside *Xiantiandao*, the mass workers merely proposed “protecting villages, making peace, and fighting the Japs and bandits” as a slogan, which fit the concept of parochial protection (Bao Houchang and Zhang Zhuoru 1988). When establishing its own secret associations, the Party complied to the ritual of drinking blood wine and the pledge words were to “share happiness, hardship and disasters; unite together to fight the Japanese; [we’d rather] be killed than retreat; [we’d rather] die than be slaved” (Zou Shiyu 1985). Although the CCP compromised its ideological embracement with peasant popular culture, such a culture actually helped to explain its

legitimacy to the ordinary society members. When infiltrating the Small Sword Association (*xiaodao hui*) in Huaibao (north Jiangsu), the mass workers set up a scene, in which a pro-party member pretended to be possessed by god, predicting that Zhu (De) and Mao (Zedong) would take over the sovereign and asked others to look to the farmland for sacred signs.<sup>18</sup> When other members flocked into the pre-arranged place, they found pig hair all over, which had already been buried in the land beforehand (Hua Yang 1985). This was a typical plot that appeared almost every time when a new dynasty came to power in the urban legends and it still worked for the CCP among peasants.

The Party's tolerance of traditional popular culture and reliance on parochialism reflected its flexibility and pragmatism in competing popular support with the GMD and the Japanese. In the Suzhong Regional Base, however, this spirit of flexibility and pragmatism was over-emphasized to an inclination of equaling secret society work to ordinary mass works, which to some extent resulted in a reverse course of infiltration from the secret society to the Party (Chen Pixian 1942, 121). Such intertwined infiltration was not a single incident in Jiangsu. Joseph Esherick observes the similar problem that the local party branch suffered from the influence of *Gelaohui* in his study on Gulin County in Shan-Gan-Ning Boarder Region. His data shows that 64 of 115 *Gelaohui* members were party members and there were 34 persons who actually joined *Gelaohui* after they had become party members (Esherick 1994). Thus, the Party had to face the side effect of its pragmatism that won it expanded influence at the same time—the uncertainty of the quality of the recruited, their unsure ideological inclination and unclear

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<sup>18</sup> Pig has the same pronunciation as the surname of Zhu De, and hair as that of Mao Zedong.

identification toward the Party. How to solve the dilemma of rapid development and uncontrollable quality of the recruits remained to be a major issue for the CCP during the War.

### **BACK TO POLITICS: THE NEW TOWNSHIP RENOVATION**

In order to prevent intensive resistance from local gentry for the Communist penetration, the CCP advised its mass workers to confine mobilization to the economic realm and avoid direct attack on the local gentry's political power basis when they first arrived in Jiangsu in 1939. Due to limited sources of qualified cadres and lack of control over local communities, the Party was only able to found its own administrative organs at district and county levels and had to rely on the heads of *bao* and *jia* hired by the Nationalist government for routine administration below the township level. Not surprisingly, quite a few of these people took a wait-and-see attitude towards the Communist government. The rent and interest reduction, the great production campaign, the grain tax collection and other party policies and movements thereby faced more resistance at lower levels. However, with the pervasive establishment of various mass associations and the moderate "three third" principle that united non-party resistance powers, the CCP gradually managed to weaken the power basis of the local gentry through economic methods. Now the existing political institution had become the rein that contained further development of the CCP and therefore, had to be renovated to facilitate its deepened penetration. Meanwhile, various Communist movements had nurtured plenty of activists who were ready to replace the traditional local gentry to take charge in the Communist offices. Hence, the two problems that the Party faced in earlier

period were no longer obstacles, and it was time to shift the focus back to the political arena.

In the middle of 1943, four years after the NFA entered Jiangsu Province, the Party announced the program of New Township Renovation (*Xinxiang zhi*). The program prescribed three sets of arrangements on the basis of specific local situations: in the central areas each sub-district selected a couple of model town to implement a general election; in the less stable areas where the prerequisites of democratic election were not mature enough, the heads of town, *bao* and *jia* were directly assigned by the superior county government; in the front areas adjacent to the Japanese sphere, the current heads were retained and deputies were appointed by higher authorities for a de facto supervising purpose (Zhonggong Suzhong er diwei 1943a). In response to this call, Tai County eradicated the traditional *bao-jia* system within its jurisdictions and finished the renovation in more than fifty towns by the end of the year (Zeng Ruqing 1983). In the 418 towns of the Fourth District of Suzhong Regional Base which suffered the most in the Pacification Campaign, 47 town chiefs were replaced by the assigned party members and the number of the towns where a new party member deputy was appointed had reached 126 by the fall (Liang Lingguang 1983). In the following year, Xinghua County Committee requested that 80% of its jurisdictions should accomplish the New Township election and the rest 20% should at least form semi-elected administrative offices by fall. Eventually, 48 of the 59 towns in Xinghua conducted township election, six practiced semi-election and only five town administrative offices remained unchanged (Zhonggong xinghua xianwei 1944b, 36-37). To further its stringent control over families and even



individuals, from 1945 the Party began to divide big sub-district and towns (over 5,000 residents) into small ones in the areas where local cadres were suitable in both quality and quantity, and prescribed each administrative village of 600-800 residents, in which the distance between each natural villages should be within two *li* (Zou Ping 1945d).

The nature of the New Township Renovation was a power struggle between the traditional local elites and the peasant activists patronized by the Party. To smooth the power transition in a reasonable manner and maintain its public democratic image, the Party ignited anti-corruption campaign that focused on the persons who it intended to expell. Some *bao* or *jia* heads who used to embezzle a considerable amount of Grain Tax or public funds ran away to the Japanese or GMD spheres once the Party announced the initiative of anti-corruption. For those who did not have serious trace of embezzlement but still were subject to replacement, the Party created a public opinion that accused them of malfeasance. Then a meeting of local gentry and party cadres was summoned to enhance the significance of the township administration for the resistance cause, which indirectly forced the targeted person to resign (Zhonggong wunan xianwei 1945a, 16-17). After such preparations, the mobilization of the township election began.

The first step was to establish the township election committee (*xiangxuan weiyuanhui*), which was elected by the representatives from local administrative offices, mass resistance associations, militias, and gentry and landlords. Usually the elected committee members covered all active organs engaging in local affairs and all social classes. For instance, in the nine committee members of Anle, three came from the local administrative office, two from the Peasant Association, and the rest four from the

Worker Association, the Woman association, the Grain Tax committee and the local gentry (Rao Shushi 1944, 123-124). When it came to the class background, members from the landlords and rich peasants usually did not exceed two if we consider nine to ten people as the average size of a committee (in the case of Anle, only one). As far as the political inclination was concerned, half of the committee members originated from the mass associations and at least one third from the administrative office. Neither complied to the “three third” principle. In this sense, it is safe to conclude that the New Township Renovation was a much more aggressive step that implied the Party’s ambition for a revolution on the local political institution.

The next came the registration of citizenship, which provided the Party with a legitimate channel to collect personal informations of local residents and a perfect arena to demonstrate its authority as the state vis-à-vis the society. It was stipulated that “all residents who were over eighteen years old were qualified for citizenship regardless of religion, party, sex, and property except for those who were mentally disordered, deprived of citizenship for crimes, and kept connection with the collaborators and Japanese” (Rao Shushi 1944, 124). Based on the stipulation, resident meetings (*cunmin dahui*) were held to discuss the qualification of each individual and registered the qualified ones on site. There were basically two ways to organize the resident meetings: on the basis of natural village, which was convenient to inclusively collect public opinions; or in the form of citizen group, which was suitable for a detailed discussion on each resident in small scale (Yanfu qu xingzheng gongshu 1942). To increase people’s attendance of the resident meetings, the local cadres of Wanyin Town (Dongtai County,

central Jiangsu) prescribed that people who participated in the registration would be issued a citizen identification card, and those without the identification card would be deprived of the right to travel and had to stay in their hometown (Xiangxuan gongzuo chubu yanjiu 1943, 18-19).

The resident meeting focused on deciding the qualification of citizenship of each village. In order to extend the propagandistic effect, the election committee prepared three types of posters to make red, yellow and white billboards, on which the names of the citizens, non-citizen for younger than eighteen years old, and those deprived of citizenship would be written correspondingly during the meeting. To prevent rush judgment on borderline persons and strive for the widest support to the renovation, some county committees, such as Rudong (central Jiangsu), added a green billboard that differentiated the people who had conducted minor crimes but did not endanger the resistance activities from those on the white billboards. These people were given another opportunity of regaining their citizenship if they behaved properly in the future. In addition, a dark red billboard was created to promote those who actively participated in the mass movements and behaved bravely in the resistance activities in the Japanese pacification areas (Xiangxuan gongzuo chubu yanjiu 1943, 20-21, 24-25; Rao Shushi 1944, 124-126). The billboards were posted in public after the resident meetings in villages for second opinions and impeachment. The portion of citizens to the whole population was kept at 70% to 80% to minimize aversion and guarantee advantage in favor of the peasant activists at the same time.

The billboard display took advantage of ordinary peasants' conventional care of face (*mianzi*) and psychological characteristics of timidity and circumspection to reinforce the authority of the Party. The discussion of individual qualification in a public gathering created an environment of surveillance, which encouraged mutual impeachment and created a sense of insecurity among the participants. Such insecurity could not be released unless one was able to assure his reliance on the authority, i.e. the CCP, through his pledge of compliance. In such a public setting, mutual support among family members, kins or community peers was of no use to alleviate the anxiety of public humiliation but only unconditional loyalty to the Party worked. Therefore, in Dianfa (central Jiangsu) one ordinary peasant waited an entire night to make sure that his omitted name was added in the red billboard in the same brush pen handwriting as others; one small landlord went to the township office to express his penitence once his name was written on the white billboard (Rao Shushi 1944, 125-126).

Once the citizen list was confirmed, each town should decide on the representatives who would, on behalf of the whole town, elect the town chief and the administrative committee.<sup>19</sup> First, the election committee summoned the meetings of the administrative office, mass associations and local party members to compose a candidate list of the representatives. This list was discussed on the basis of natural village, got approval from the corresponding villager meetings, and then was exhibited on the major roads of the village for second opinions. The candidates were usually twice as many as

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<sup>19</sup> The candidates of the town chief and the administrative committee should be nominated by the residency council of the corresponding level (See discussion about the residency council). I make this estimation according to the election articles, working reports and memoirs. This point is not clearly stated in the cited references.

the finally elected members. Finally the town citizen meeting (*xiangmin dahui*) elected the representatives from the list.

The result of the representative election demonstrated the Party's overwhelming victory over the traditional local elites. As far as the candidates' backgrounds were concerned, in the 73 candidates of Anle, 36 came from the administrative offices, 22 from the Peasant Association, 5 from the Women Association, 2 from the Worker Association, 5 from local militia and 3 from landlord and gentry. Among the 81 candidates of Dianfa, only two were from the landlords and gentry (Rao Shushi 1944, 126). Compared with the composition of the election committee, the percentage of landlords and gentry significantly decreased from 15% to 2-4%. Such a decrease almost eradicated the landlords' chance of being elected as the town chief or the committee members, and deprived them of the chance to materialize, or even express, their interests in the new government.

Certainly, comprehensive control over the local government did not mean to the annulment of the United Front policy. After all, the Party was in urgent need of munitions and fiscal supplies from the local gentry. Hence, in the final twenty-eight representatives of Anle, there were two workers, two poor peasants, twelve middle peasants, ten rich peasants and two landlords. The survival ratio of the landlords and gentry was two thirds, much higher than those of other groups (Rao Shushi 1944, 128-129). One can find that the majority of the representatives came from the middle and rich peasants, who composed the majority of the population in local communities. Such overwhelming proportion of rich and middle peasants continued in the elected administrative committee,

which was composed of three rich peasants, two middle peasants, one poor peasant and one middle landlord (130). One fact worth mentioning was that all three rich peasants recently upgraded from middle peasants. In this sense, this composition was in accordance with the social reality, and thus, strengthened the Party's democratic image in public opinions. Meanwhile, these two groups were also the ones who benefited the most from the Party's wartime policies, and thereby, were most willing to cooperate with the Party on the election and local administrative affairs to maintain their advantageous status.

A technically democratic election did not prevent the Party from manipulating its existing resources to keep the course of the election under control. First of all, general elections were only held in the central areas where the Party had established firm control through the mass associations. For those places where the election results could not be guaranteed, the Party simply assigned the preferred cadre or promoted a deputy to check the chief's jurisdiction. After all, the ultimate goal of the New Township Renovation was to replace the unfavorable officials with party members or peasant activists and substantially control lower-level administrations. Second, the local mass associations held a series of member meetings to reinforce the significance of electing the masses' own leaders. Slogans, such as "democracy, democracy, the masses in charge", "if one wants fairness, officers have to come from the masses", "*bao-jia* system was not democratic, and the masses have suffered so much from it", and so on were posted on the walls of the central public spaces (Xiangxuan gongzuo chubu yanjiu 1943, 13). In addition, except for the activists of the mass associations, the local cadres also set their focuses on those who

held complaints towards the current town chiefs or had been refused for help by them. Meanwhile the party branch sponsored its favored candidates for election campaigns and helped them prepare speeches. To confine such manipulation to an acceptable limit, the party branch was ordered to only secure the control over several key positions. However, overt deployment was not rare in the local elections. In the election of Xiaohai Sub-district (Taibei County, central Jiangsu), once the Party nominated candidates came to the stage, the arranged masses chanted slogans, hit drums, flocked to give him red and green paper flowers and carried him around the stage. Such ceremonial reactions convinced other candidates that the result has already been set up in advance and the election was merely a puppet play controlled by the Party. In a town of Taibei-Dongtai area (central Jiangsu), the party branch refused to end its subordinate village meeting until its preferred candidate was eventually elected as the village head (37-41). All these farces resulted from the absurd understanding of democracy by the local cadres. On the one hand, their low education level and traditional conception of the official-subject relationship determined their superficial perception of “democracy”. On the other hand, the systematic discordance between the Party’s public democratic image and its internal authoritarian institution further confused its local agents.

Faced with the Party’s aggressive attacks for political power, the landlords and gentry sought ways to resist. First, they tried to achieve consensus within people of the same social status and chose suitable candidates to represent their class interests. For instance, the electoral slogan of the Rudong gentry candidate was “if the peasant association cadre becomes the town chief, we could not live; if the poor becomes the

town chief, [private] property would be shared in future”. In addition, they endeavored to draw supports from the intermediate power. They asserted, “If the mass cadres are elected, people will have to turn in more Grain Tax”. Taking advantage of peasants’ conventional conception of *mianzi*, they further joked about the low education level of the peasant candidates, “How shameful to elect an illiterate to be the town chief”. Certainly they would not forget to borrow authority from the Chongqing Nationalist government, “the NFA will leave soon, and the Central Army is coming back” (33). In addition, the landlords also tried to create a stir during the public gatherings. In Huai’an County (north Jiangsu), one landlord from Zhaoshe village, Zhang, arranged his followers to make speeches against the peasant cadres during the villager meetings, nominated his candidates against the Peasant Association, and argued for the voting procedures. When the presider blamed them for making noises, they accused him of dictatorship in return. In Zhangdun Village, the candidate patronized by the landlords successfully won the most votes since the Party’s candidate was attacked for illiteracy. In Wangyanshe Village, when their preferred candidates lost in the election, the landlords and their followers instigated villagers to demonstrate their dissatisfaction by leaving immediately (Zou Ping, 1945d, 80-81). These actions revealed the deeply embedded political influence of the gentry class in local communities and the uncertainty towards the Communist authorities hovering in ordinary people’s mind.

The response of ordinary peasants to the New Township Renovation varied as well. Generally speaking, they were supportive of the idea that they were entitled to select their own village heads. However, their understanding about “democracy” was



quite superficial and absurd. What cheered them the most was not the rights they enjoyed as citizens, but the possible upward social mobility that had been prohibited for their lack of education and wealth. Since some local cadres arbitrarily highlighted the connection between citizenship and travel passports to improve attendance of village meetings, most ordinary peasants simply equated citizen rights to that of free travel. In addition, the upward social status of the mass association cadres unconsciously created a coercive tendency and they barely kept a democratic image. One middle peasant complained about the local Women Resistance Association, “[The association cadres] expressed [negative] opinions [on you] once they disagreed with you on one word; you had to be present if the women association head, Yang, called for a meeting; [our] citizen right would be deprived of otherwise” (81). A considerable portion of peasants were unaware of the power struggle between the Party and the local gentry behind the New Township Renovation. They either did not understand the difference between an elected or assigned village/town head—“the new government is doing well, why do we need to elect a new town chief”; or showed indifference towards the election—“I will vote for whoever I am asked to” (Zouping 1945d, 82-83; Rao Shushi 1944, 131). Some simply conceptualized “democracy” as absolute freedom by which they were entitled to do whatever they liked. For instance, they did not have to perform corvee service when the local cadres required them to.

The New Township Renovation was launched in Jiangsu in the middle of 1943 when the Communist movement had entered a mature phase and the Party had won considerable support from peasants. Its purpose was to challenge the existing political

institution that had contained the Party's further penetration. Therefore, the renovation was at first a power struggle that intended to deconstruct the political authority of the local gentry and landlords, and replace them with the Party personnel. To realize this target, the traditional compliance to the local elite in ordinary peasants' mindsets had to be thoroughly eradicated. In this sense, the renovation was also an ideological struggle that was aimed at "feudalist thoughts of hierarchy, prerogatives, bureaucracy, and paternalism" (Xiangxuan gongzuo chubu yanjiu 1943, 69). If we translate these party jargons into understandable language, the Party's intention was to break peasants' consistent dread that stemmed from the long-lasting partial status vis-à-vis the landlords and terminate their dominant standing under its leadership. Hence, when the Party promoted "democracy" in the movement, we should not conceptualize it as a contract between people and the represented government, but a convenience that could convince the masses of the feasibility of revolution. The extrinsic claim of "democracy" and the intrinsic authoritarian institution created the first conflict between rhetorics and realities. Meanwhile, the wartime situations forced the Party to downgrade its revolution to renovation, which was "to weaken not eliminate the feudal power, to deconstruct the landlords' dictatorship but not yet to establish peasant-worker's... to destroy the *bao-jia* system not insist on democracy, to appeal to the enlightened gentlemen to participate but not guarantee the absolute advantage of party members in the government" (69-75). These moderate guidelines restricted the radical actions against the landlords and gentry, and thus, created another rhetoric-reality conflict in the movement. Although they were clear about the goal of the renovation, the local cadres were confused by these conflicts

and had to rely on their conventional understandings of official-subject relationship, which further reinforced the authoritarian inclination in their routine works. Therefore, in terms of the result, the Party generally accomplished the replacement of landlords' agents at the basic administrative level. However, conceptualizing the renovation as a pure power struggle, most local cadres, even party members, hardly could tell the differences between them and their predecessors. The discrepancy between the theoretical guidance and pragmatic goals actually created most of the problems in the Communist movement in Jiangsu.

#### **THE PUZZLE OF THE TRIANGLE RELATIONSHIP: THE GOVERNMENT, THE PARTY AND THE MASS ASSOCIATIONS**

As the key for local penetration, the mass resistance associations played a significant role in connecting ordinary peasants with the Party, and developing activists, local cadres and party members. In the ideal relationship between the government and the mass associations, the latter should be the firmest social reliance for the former. They should be the most activist participant to the government and make themselves the biggest personnel resources for the local administration. Meanwhile the mass associations should also be the surveillance power for the government, and criticize and impeach against the disqualified and corrupted officials. At the same time, the government should respect the jurisdiction of the mass associations and protect their activities instead of regarding them as its extended organs, subordinate to its management. In addition, it should value the criticisms and suggestions from the mass associations and adjust its working plan accordingly (Rao Shushi 1942, 53-55). As far as the ideal party-mass-

association relationship was concerned, the party members should become the leaders and vanguards of the mass associations relying on “their correct policies and guidances, unyielding faith on revolution, fearlessness towards hardships and the unbreakable struggling spirit” (58-59). However, the status of the mass associations was far more confusing and awkward vis-à-vis the government and the Party in reality.

Theoretically, the mass associations were localized autonomous organs independent from either the government or the Party. Nevertheless, even the most influential peasant association could not afford independence, not to mention the smaller ones. First of all, although the mass associations charged a membership fee, this sort of revenue was far from enough to sustain routine activities due to the limited amount per person. The membership fee had to be kept at a low rate to encourage massive participation. After all, the mass associations were not really as voluntary as they claimed to be. Hence, they largely relied on financial allocation from the local government, and became de facto subordinate organs. Second, none of the mass associations could afford separated offices for routine works. To take the Peasant Resistance Association of the Route East area as an instance, the presidents and syndics (*lishi*) of the township level hardly had offices in town. At the sub-district and higher levels, there was only a joint office of the various resistance associations. However, the persons sitting there were not cadres from the associations but the party cadres in charge of the mass association affairs. In addition, the office had guards standing in front of the entrance (Rao Shushi 1942, 87-88). Therefore, the joint office was a de facto party branch. How could an association

without financial resource or physical office maintain its autonomy either in people's minds or in reality?

The overlap among the Party, the government, and the mass associations was even more pervasive as far as personnel and responsibilities were concerned. Since the peasant resistance association was to some extent the Party's local agent in charge of the mobilization of mass movements and recruitments, its cadres were usually also party members. This resulted in an invasive personnel overlapping: in a considerable amount of the township peasant associations, their councils equaled to the same level party branches, and the council presidents were usually the branch secretaries (*zhishu*) (Cai Yun and Zhu Shida 1984; Luxibei tewei 1941; Rao Shushi 1944, 68-69). The personnel overlapping further caused the confusion of the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the three parts. For instance, in the Route East area, the government staff shouldered the responsibility of the peasant association cadres to mobilize for rent reduction while the peasant association cadres represented the government to collect the Grain Tax (Rao Shushi 1942, 96-97). As a result, neither was able to concentrate on their major responsibilities. In Nantong County, the party branch within the government took full charge of all the administrative affairs while the Taidong County government implemented all its policies through party branch meetings and neglected the Party's comprehensive leading role in policy making. The government completely lost its independence in administrative operations to the county party committee, which made the county chief feel inferiority in daily works and highly constrained his initiatives. There was also another extreme instance in Qihai County where the government took full

charge and kept the county party committee as a puppet (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei 1942d, 170).

Such confusions and overlappings of responsibilities among the three parts blurred the understandings towards them in the minds of party members as well as ordinary people. The mass associations regarded themselves as another form of the Party and set a set of similarly strict recruitment procedures. For instance, one peasant resistant association stipulated that one had to have two referees and pass investigation before getting membership in the Route East area. Some even required an observation period (*yubei qi*) before officially admitted one. Such complex procedures departed from the Party's original goals to establish mass associations, which were aimed at incorporating ordinary peasants into the Party's framework and nurturing their identification toward the Party. Consequently, such restrict procedures discouraged mass participation (Rao Shushi 1942, 80-81). In the minds of ordinary peasants, the authority of the peasant association was much higher than the government and the Party since it led most mass movements, such as the grain borrowing, the rent-interest reduction and the great production, which provided the most pragmatic benefits on their lives. The president of the Peasant Association in Anle was engaged in daily administrative affairs and held unrestrained jurisdiction. Once a peasant was expelled from the peasant association, he told his fellow peasants that he was scared to death, much more scared than the time when the landlord threatened to withdraw his rented land (Rao Shushi 1944, 99-100). The peasants' dread was no different from the one they had held towards the landlord class. In this sense, the increasing authority that the peasant association enjoyed was merely a power transition

from one to another; and the ordinary people were incapable of conceptualizing the different roles of the Party, the government or the mass associations.

In places where there was a relatively clear borderline between the three parts, the party members' arbitrary order towards the peasant cadres became a pervasive issue that deterred massive participation, especially the landlords and gentry, in the administration. The government and mass associations were degraded to dependent organs only in charge of details (Rao Shushi 1942, 55-57; Su Yu 1943b, 143). Some higher-ranking party cadres even equated keeping the autonomy of the mass associations to tolerating the backward thoughts among peasants, claiming that it would further endanger the NFA's military mobilization and the Communist revolution (Zhonggong ludong qu dangwei 1941, 119-120). The price the Party had to pay for such arbitrary gestures was the decreasing popularity of the local government. For instance, the county chief of Tai County, Hui Yuyu, was much more capable of dealing with administrative works than his counterpart of Ruxi County, Ji Kaiqiang. However, the Ruxi county government enjoyed a much higher popularity and wider recognition among the local people than the Tai county government since the former was relatively independent from the local CCP branch and its personnel covered most classes including the landlords and gentry, while the latter was almost exclusively controlled by party members (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei 1942d, 165-166). The arbitrary attitude of local party branches sometimes led to another extreme that the party members refused to take responsibility for mass work and left the mass associations completely unattended. The poor communications between the two parts thus created misunderstandings about the implementation of the Party's

policies, or further made the Party lose control over the mass movement (Luxibei tewei 1941, 4-5). The ultra-leftist inclination in the rent reduction and grain borrowing movements usually resulted from this problem.

The ultimate reason that caused puzzle of the triangle relationship resided in the shortage of qualified cadres, which revealed the unsolvable conflict between the Party's rapid penetration into local communities and the affordable personnel resources that could sustain and consolidate such development. The Party had to wisely allocate its core cadres into localities and relied on their leading roles in exploring potential local cadre resources. As a result, there was always a clear borderline in the cadre echelon of each place between the locals and the outsiders.

In order to achieve pervasive control over local communities, the Party had to sacrifice quality for quantity in the earlier period. Its endorsed ideology and the status as an opposition party determined that the CCP's major target had to be the suppressed peasants, most of whom were illiterates or with little education. Therefore, corruption, dereliction, absurd knowledge of the Communist movement, oscillating stance, parochial and conservative inclinations were pervasive among local cadres. However, they also had their irreplaceable advantages compared with the outside cadres, on which the Party had to depend for further development. First, as indigenes who were familiar with native comprehensive circumstances, the local cadres knew the best way to incorporate the abstract policies into concrete indigenous rituals, customs and conventions to win the most popularity among their fellows, and thereby would also be easily recognized as the convincing leaders in their communities. Second, their native social networks largely



facilitated the Party's interference with daily operations of local society. Their local identities also served as perfect camouflage against the Japanese mopping-up and pacification campaigns. Therefore, the CCP had to rely on them as the agents to materialize its control over local society, especially below the township level. As such, the local cadres became a considerable strength that was able to counter the outside cadres when disagreement occurred.

Although special attention was paid to their reeducation within the Party, the working capacity of the local cadres varied significantly, compared with the relatively high quality of the outside cadres who were marked by their standard mandarin, well education, discipline, and firm faiths. Such a distinction of the two groups developed the psychological advantage of the outside cadres vis-à-vis the local ones. It also encouraged the more capable ones to take full charge of local affairs under the Party's pragmatic working style, which emphasized concrete results of development, such as the number of the party members, mass associations, draftees and deducted rent, and neglected the corresponding jurisdictions of the Party, the government and the mass associations. This phenomenon reflected the inconsistency between the CCP's democratic claims in rhetoric and the authoritarian characteristics in reality. The puzzle of the triangle relationship was the intensive explosion of this issue. Although the Party promoted its democratic institutions, a new downward hierarchical sequence of outside cadres, local cadres, and the masses was gradually formed in local communities. Lacking enough knowledge to conceptualize democracy and confused by the Party's claims and deeds, the local cadres

and the masses had to resort to their conventional wisdoms to understand the official-mass relation under the Communist governance.

### Chapter Three Organizing Propaganda

There is no doubt that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) expertly manipulated public opinion to induce support for their struggle against the Nationalists (*Guomindang*, abbreviated as GMD). Before the War of Resistance, the CCP had already taken advantage of its status as the opposition party to call for a truce with the Nationalists and blame the GMD government for insisting on civil war and making the country vulnerable to the Japanese imperialist threat. It successfully organized student and intellectual demonstrations against the regime, enabling them to create public condemnation of the Nationalist government and establish itself as firm source of public resistance. The Party's progressive image was so influential among students and intellectuals that many migrated to Yan'an or other communist base areas in order to participate in the wartime resistance against the Japanese.

A good example of the Party's expert manipulation was its successful handling of the crisis associated with the New Fourth Army Incident in January 1941.<sup>1</sup> The Communist attack in the media against the Nationalist government convincingly portrayed the Party as an innocent victim that was betrayed by "the elder brother" it had deeply trusted. This scenario earned at least sympathy, if not support, among the public.

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<sup>1</sup> On January 7, 1941, the New Fourth Army (NFA) headquarters and its direct subordinate detachment, which were retreating northward in accordance with the agreement between the GMD and the CCP, were besieged by 80,000 Nationalist soldiers. The commissar, Xiang Ying, was killed on the battlefield, and the commander, Ye Ting, was captured. Only about 2,000 NFA soldiers survived the Nationalist offensive. The CCP later charged the GMD of deliberately exterminating the NFA headquarters. Shortly after the incident happened, Zhou Enlai, the chief representative of the CCP in Chongqing, published a poem in the New China Daily (*Xinhua Ribao*), which claimed that the NFA and the Commander Ye suffered "unprecedented injustice." This poem related the incident to a popular historical story from the Three Kingdom period (220-280), in which the elder son of Cao Cao attempted to kill his brother, who survived by relying on his talent.

Both the domestic and international press sided almost unanimously with the CCP and criticized the GMD and Chiang Kai-shek for sabotaging the anti-Japanese coalition. Hardly anyone considered this incident retaliation for the CCP-GMD skirmish a couple of months earlier in Huangqiao of Jiangsu Province, in which Chen Yi and his NFA drove the provincial governor, Han Deqin, and his Nationalist force out of their power base in north Jiangsu (Benton 1999, 511-514). After the New Fourth Army incident, the second United Front inevitably slid into a de facto breaking state. On the one hand, the Nationalist government stopped ammunition supplies to the Communist troops and enacted economic blockades targeting the Communist border regions in the northwest. On the other hand, the Party got rid of the restrictive adherence to the United Front that had legitimized the Eighth Route Army and the NFA. The NFA and the base areas began their unprecedented development north of the Yangtze River and received considerable manpower and ammunition support in this area. Although both parties got what they wanted from the incident, the CCP obtained moral advantage and public sympathy among both ordinary people and the mass media due to its skillful propaganda.

Historians of the GMD who have investigated the causes of the Nationalist defeat on the mainland have been particularly interested in analyzing the propaganda strategies of the CCP. In a typical study, historian Jin Dakai attributes the success of the Communist propaganda to the clear focus of each developing phase of the Party. Jin argues that the CCP cleverly established connections between the Nationalist government and foreign intrusions—first western imperialism in the first civil war period (1927-1937) and then Japanese during the Resistance War. By equating anti-foreign intrusion to anti-

Nationalists, the Party further legitimized its opposition. He claimed that the CCP began to publicize its democratic image during the postwar period (1946-1949) to win massive support (Jin 1954). Blinded by ideological bias, Jin failed to recognize that propaganda strategies alone were a far less convincing explanation of why people were persuaded. He also neglects to examine how the public received Communist propaganda.

Although historians of China agree on the Party's adroit manipulation of propaganda and agitation, this topic has received little scholarly attention in studies of the Chinese Revolution. John Fitzgerald examines Mao Zedong's years as the head of the Nationalist Propaganda Bureau during the first United Front period (1924-1927) and treats him as a master of propaganda and discipline.<sup>2</sup> He argues that Mao laid the foundation for the propaganda program for the GMD and further established the principle of "one party, one leader" for both the Communists and the Nationalists (Fitzgerald 1996, 214-260). However, Fitzgerald's emphasis on Mao as a master of propaganda overshadowed his other identity in this period as a peasant movement activist, a more important role in the development of the Chinese Revolution. This problem reveals a possible explanation for the dearth of research on propaganda. Alone, propaganda cannot explain the Communist triumph in 1949. Moreover, interested scholars have faced a scarcity in primary sources: most local party newspapers, wall posters, and pamphlets were lost during the War. Moreover, there was no way to record or take photos of the local dramas and *yangge* that were played for propaganda purpose during the war, and it is even more difficult to evaluate the audience's reception.

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<sup>2</sup> Mao was head of the Nationalist Propaganda Bureau between 1925-1926.

Current research has stopped searching for the singular reason for the Communist victory or the Nationalist failure. More and more scholars have begun to consider the development of the Chinese Revolution as a complicated and contingent course that was highly influenced by several factors, including the local environment and communities, revolutionary leadership, economy and international context. In this sense, an investigation focusing on the Party's propaganda activities illuminates the different facets of the communist movement. In this chapter, I explore Communist propaganda in base areas in wartime Jiangsu. First, I introduce the guidelines and principles of the Party's propaganda strategies and explore how high-ranking leaders conceptualized the significance of this issue. Second, I examine various channels, including newspapers and mass drama associations, through which local cadres and mass workers created a new cultural environment in favor of Communist mass mobilization. Last, I analyze the Communist propaganda that targeted collaborating personnel. Based on this investigation, I argue the Party's propaganda was successful not only because of the specific strategies for corresponding targets and the improvising ability of responsible cadres, but more importantly, because it relied on the Party's organizational channels, through which abstract advantages of a positive public image were converted into concrete developments for the Communist movement.

### **WHAT IS PROPAGANDA?**

In English, the concept of propaganda comes from the Christian Sacred Congregation's *de Propaganda Fide*, which was established to persuade men and women all over world to believe in Christianity (Robert Jackall 1995). In spite of its original

religious implications, propaganda gradually came to be regarded as a frequent method employed by modern states to mobilize people, attack opponents and justify political projects. Z.A.B Zeman defines “propaganda” as a highly intellectual activity that seeks to convince the masses of the virtues and benefits of some policy or organization. The effect of such “propaganda” is usually determined by whether specific slogans and strategies are successfully integrated into public vocabularies and social requisites (Zeman 1995). Psychologist, Harold Lasswell, further outlines several characteristics of successful propaganda activity: first of all, it should intensify favorable public opinions to persuade neutral attitudes and overshadow opposition; second, it must be made in coordination with tangible self-positioning and a comprehensive understanding of the opponent so that enough information can be supplied to practitioners to create a responding agenda (Harold D. Lasswell 1995). On the basis of a theoretical structure framed by these studies, it is reasonable to posit that “propaganda” mobilizes possible social resources to create a distorted but attractive ideology for the masses and block the opponent’s influence in every aspect of society.

The negative connotation of “propaganda” in English literature once made me hesitate to adopt it to translate the term “*xuanchuan*,” which is a neutral expression in Chinese. Although lacking better options, I eventually decided to stick to this translation, I hope to highlight the inclusive meaning of “propaganda” in the Party’s dictionary and deemphasize its “distorted” aspects. Actually, the concept of “distortion” itself is problematic since it requires a comparative reference that is supposed to be objective

reality. However, because reality can never be completely reconstructed in people's narrative, its objectivity remains a relative degree subject to the narrator.

In the political structure of the CCP, the Department of Propaganda was not merely responsible for issues related to media and the press. It was a regular department within each administrative level, including the central committee and its branch bureaus (such as Huazhong Bureau), regional, provincial, district and county party committees, and the political apparatus of both the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army. Each propaganda department at the regional or provincial levels had six (or seven) subordinated offices:

- 1) Propaganda office—responsible for propaganda and instigation outside the Party and research on the relevant policies of the Japanese, the collaborationist government and the GMD;
- 2) Education office—responsible for regular and cadre education inside the Party;
- 3) Civil education office—responsible for civil education;
- 4) Publication and distribution office—responsible for publications and distributions;
- 5) Editing and censor committee—responsible for management and censorship;
- 6) Culture committee—responsible for cultural activities;
- 7) Party newspaper committee (optional) (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1940b).

In the propaganda departments at the district and county levels, the subordinated offices were cut down to just two: propaganda and education. The latter was in charge of both inner-party and civil education; all other relevant responsibilities fell under the jurisdiction of the former (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1940b). Zhang Wentian, the minister of the Department of Propaganda in the Communist Central government, once defined the spectrum of the Communist wartime propaganda as targeting all the activities related to people's minds, such as politics, education, culture and literature (Zhang



Wentian 1941). Both the responsibilities of the propaganda departments and Minister Zhang's explanation of the coverage of propaganda indicate that wartime propaganda activities aimed not merely at indoctrinating the masses with ideological messages and perceptions, but more importantly, sought to induce people to internalize these messages and perceptions. Such internalization would gradually revise people's preexisting understanding of their lives, careers, current situations, local communities and the ongoing warfare. The ultimate goal was to make people view everything from a Communist perspective.

Technically speaking, the CCP's propaganda activities were composed of two major aspects—to propagandize (*xuanchuan*) and to instigate (*gudong*). *Xuanchuan* referred to publicizing revolutionary policies and theories, including “refuting hostile policies and theories from opponents, and cultural and educational activities (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1940b).” In this sense, *xuanchuan* targeted people with a higher literacy level through written methods. *Gudong* aimed at instigating specific collective emotions, such as rage, sympathy, sorrow or hostility, on the masses. The Central Government's Department of Propaganda defined its responsibilities in detail:

- 1) To lead and conduct all propaganda and instigation activities outside the Party, including those focusing on anti-Japanese and anti-collaborating themes;
- 2) To lead and conduct regular party member education and cadre education, including different levels of party schools and cadre training classes;
- 3) To offer guidance and promote civil education;
- 4) To offer directions and promote cultural, entertainment and academic activities;
- 5) To lead and organize the publication and distribution of party newspapers and to edit, censor and publish various kinds of books, textbooks and other propaganda products;

6) To keep under surveillance and study the political moves and propaganda strategies of the enemy and the alliance, and provide corresponding counteractions;<sup>3</sup>

7) To influence and direct non-party cultural, educational, propaganda and instigation apparatuses and organizations (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1940b).

According to the principles of Communist propaganda, *xuanchuan* and *gudong* should fulfill their own separate tasks while maintaining cohesive consistency. *Xuanchuan* activities offered a small group of people the theoretical explanation of a specific issue in order to provide them with a comprehensive understanding of the cause, result, future and underlying rules of development. While Communist mass workers usually designed their *xuanchuan* activities in written form, *Gudong* activities were less about education and focused on a much larger audience. Mass workers took advantage of well-known facts or events in public speeches and improvisation to agitate the apathetic masses. *Gudong* laid a broader foundation for further *xuanchuan*, and *xuanchuan* helped to reinforce the favorable public opinions that the previous *gudong* works had won over (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1941b). In short, *xuanchuan* and *gudong* emphasized the qualitative and quantitative aspects of propaganda activities, respectively.

Although each propaganda activity had a specific theme and purpose, mass workers were required to adjust their intonations, speeches, and attitudes to accommodate audiences and physical environments. Due to the low literacy level of the majority of the population in base areas, most propagandists from the county level or below conducted more *gudong* activities in their daily works. *Gudong* speeches were characterized by their

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<sup>3</sup> The document did not specify the “enemy” and the “alliance”. They refer to the Japanese/collaborationist and the Nationalists forces respectively.

concise language, short length and concrete examples. They often revealed conspiracies or the crimes of collaborators, heroic feats of local militia, and achievements under the Party leadership. In order to increase the frequency of *gudong* activities, and thus to envelop communities in a Communist cultural environment, mass workers took advantage of local institutions and customs. The market days of nearby towns, tea houses, guild clubs, and ancestral halls (*citang*) were regular occasions for Communist propaganda. In addition to public speeches, propagandists relied on folk songs, local plays, story-telling and etc. to convey their messages (Zhongyang xuanchuan bu 1941d). In this sense, propaganda became a part of the daily life of communities as it became closely linked to local culture and entertainment.

In the base areas of Jiangsu, propaganda activities were generally launched through the following vehicles. First were conventional print publications. The Sunan Regional Base provides an ideal example. The Party established the Jiangnan Press, which published a bi-monthly magazine, *Jiangnan*, a newspaper called *Dazhong Bao*, a professional magazine called *Jiaoyu Yanjiu* (Education research), and several series of books on the constitution and politics. There were also local newspapers at the county and subdistrict levels. However, such newspapers usually did not last long for lack of manpower, and technical and financial support. Second, local propaganda cadres helped to establish a wide-scale wall poster network in each village, which served as a supplementary channel to regular prints. Wall posters included news reports, hot topic discussions, letters from readers, common knowledge, vocabulary lessons, short novels, folk songs, and cartoons. They were usually posted every two or three days and circulated

among nearby villages. Third, small libraries and the national salvation rooms (*jiuwan shi*) sponsored by local youth, women's and children's resistance associations were set up to share cultural resources. These places made newspapers, magazines and books, published in the regional bases, available to the masses. They also organized various seminars, colloquiums, and lectures where people at different levels of literacy could read newspapers or Communist books collectively. Finally, propaganda teams, working teams, drama groups, folk music groups and battlefield service groups (*zhandi fuwu tuan*) provided communist entertainment in their local neighborhoods. Places that were suitable for public gatherings, such as tea houses, clubs and playgrounds, provided the stages for their performances (Wu Baokang 1940). These propaganda activities helped the Party create a cultural environment favorable to the development of the Communist movement. Their success relied on the combination of the Party's propaganda methods and the organizational channels that helped the community internalize favorable public opinions and facilitated further Communist penetration.

#### **A MASS LINE IN NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION**

Newspaper was conventionally regarded as the primary method of propaganda due to its large-scale circulation and easy accessibility to the masses. It no doubt became one of the most important propaganda channels in Jiangsu's base areas. Confined by geography and the Japanese military threat, there was no newspaper that could be distributed in all the regional bases in the province. Generally speaking, the wartime Communist newspapers could be categorized into two types as far as the targeted readers were concerned. One was the official newspapers sponsored by party committees at

district or higher levels. *Yanfu Bao* of the Yanfu District, *Jiangnan* of the East Route, *Suzhong Bao* of the Suzhong Regional Base, and *Fuxiao Bao* of the Huaibei Regional Base were typical of this type.

These newspapers targeted higher-ranking party cadres and local intellectuals, such as elementary and middle school teachers and educated youth. Therefore, articles published in these newspapers were at least 1,000 words long, eloquently written and logically coherent. These newspapers covered new developments in the ongoing warfare, domestic and international politics, important editorials reprinted from party newspapers of the Yan'an and other boarder regions, and most importantly, local news. As the mouthpiece of the local party committee, these newspapers were responsible for reporting ongoing mass movements. Meanwhile, they also served as a platform through which new decrees and rules were conveyed to the public. In addition, they provided a discussion forum in which party cadres exchanged different or even conflicting views of local situations and future plans. These party newspapers perfectly fit the *xuanchuan* aspect of Communist propaganda. However, these papers targeted a very small group that made up only a minority of the local population.

The other type, popular newspapers, targeted at a much larger readership. To access semi-literate or illiterate peasants, the propagandists creatively incorporated mass line policy into the publication process of the newspapers, which significantly enlarged the involvement of the ordinary masses in this conventional propaganda arena. Although also funded by local offices, these newspapers had a much larger, mostly amateur, staff. The number of popular newspapers was small compared with the official newspapers.

Nevertheless, they enjoyed great popularity among the masses. More importantly, the popular newspapers functioned as an organizational channel for Communist mobilization. The publication and circulation of *Yanfu Dazhong* exemplifies this function.

*Yanfu Dazhong* was established in April 1943 in response to Mao Zedong's famous speech on the colloquium of culture and art in 1942. It was the first popular newspaper that regarded the ordinary masses not only as potential readers, but also as reporters and writers in Jiangsu as well as in central China. This new strategy significantly expanded the coverage of conventional news publications and facilitated the mass mobilization of the Communist movement in the Yanfu district. The first proprietor of the newspaper office was Wang Lanxi (1912-1996), who was also the deputy of the propaganda department of Yanfu District, and the first chief editor was Zhao Pingsheng (1903-1990, under the pseudonym as Huang Zemin at the time). Both were experienced Communist propagandists, and their personal experiences largely influenced the style of *Yanfu Dazhong*.

As the proprietor, Wang Lanxi was a sophisticated dealer of cultural propaganda activities inside and outside of China. He was born in Lanfeng County in Henan Province and attended college in Shanghai in the 1930s. It was during the same period that he joined the association of Chinese Left-wing Writers (*Zhongguo Zuoyi Zuojia Lianmeng*). Wang became a CCP member in 1932 and took an active part in organizing the student movement in Shanghai afterwards. He was admitted by Waseda University in Japan and became an international student in 1934. The new social and scholarly environment did not obstruct Wang's passion for spreading his leftist beliefs. With his classmates, he

established a magazine called East Stream (*Dongliu*) that promoted leftist culture and art, and soon after arriving in Tokyo, he organized an alliance of nature scientists. Two years later, Wang helped organize the general alliance of the new culture movement (*xinwenhua yundong zongtongmeng*) and became one of its leaders. Meanwhile, he joined the World Editing and Translating Press in Tokyo and edited for World Trend (*Shijie Dongxiang*), a magazine that introduced new western thoughts to Chinese students overseas in Japan. When the War broke out, he returned to his native place and became responsible for propaganda and culture works in the Henan provincial committee of the CCP before coming to the Subei Regional base in 1941. Wang had a great deal of experience with initiating student movements and mobilizing intellectuals. However, he lacked direct knowledge for dealing with ordinary peasants. His status as an outsider with a northern accent further hindered his attempts to connect to the masses. Wang's disadvantage was not obvious for the proprietor of an official party newspaper. However, for a popular newspaper targeted at the masses, like *Yanfu Dazhong*, this problem had to be fixed.

The newspaper's chief editor, Zhao Pingsheng, was as an excellent solution to Wang's disconnection from the masses. Zhang was born to a poor peasant family of Yiwu in Zhejiang Province. He was admitted to the First Normal School in the provincial capital, Hangzhou, in 1924 and joined the Communist Youth League one year later. Zhang officially became a party member when he graduated in 1926 and was sent back to Yiwu to establish a secret agent spot for the CCP under the name of the Nationalist party branch. After the first United Front broke up in 1927, the Party shifted its mobilizing

focus from urban workers to peasants in rural areas. Considering his class background, Zhao was appointed head of the Department of Peasant Work in Yiwu and organized peasant associations in rural villages. It was from this experience that he got an intimate look at peasant life and its problems. Zhao was arrested for mobilizing on behalf of the Communist movement three times before the War and eventually lost connection with the party branch. By 1942, when he reestablished his affiliation to the Party and was assigned to the Subei Regional Base, Zhao had accumulated plenty of experiences communicating with peasants. Furthermore, as a native of the Yangtze delta, he was more easily identified as an indigen by local peasants, which enabled him to tailor the content of *Yanfu Dazhong* to popular interest. Zhao's appointment was an ideal addition to Wang's ability to detail nuances in party policies and provide general guidelines of reports.

*Yanfu Dazhong* was a 4K four-page newspaper published every three or four days. It was mostly distributed in the Yanfu District, but had considerable influence in the entire Subei Regional Base. Since the NFA headquarters were located in this district and the Japanese mopping-up campaigns were relatively mild in the area, the newspaper enjoyed ample financial support, plentiful staff, and a relatively stable target group and environment. As its inaugural statement clearly indicated, *Yanfu Dazhong* mainly "reported local news and events in Yanfu District as well as other domestic and international political and military developments" in order to make more people aware of "the current situations in China and the world and the most up-to-date information on the



progress of the anti-mopping-up campaign.”<sup>4</sup> As a popular newspaper, it endeavored to keep its reports short and easy to understand. In order to appeal to ordinary peasants, every two or three issues, it devoted one page to agricultural production tips. Practical strategies such as these expanded the readership beyond literate party members and local cadres and improved its popularity among the masses.

The editors tried to enrich the content and expand the coverage of *Yanfu Dazhong*’s reports while keeping a stable framework and establishing a unique style. The two pictures below are excerpts from *Yanfu Dazhong* and roughly depict the arrangement of each page. The front page usually covered the most current local news, such as the victories of the NFA or militia against the collaborationist forces, and ongoing mobilizations. This section was usually composed by professional writers or featured shortened versions of longer reports from official newspapers. The second and third pages were reserved for short pieces about daily life in rural communities, local events and personal reflections. These pieces were not significant enough to be published on the front page, but functioned as Communist indoctrination and appealed to the masses. If a

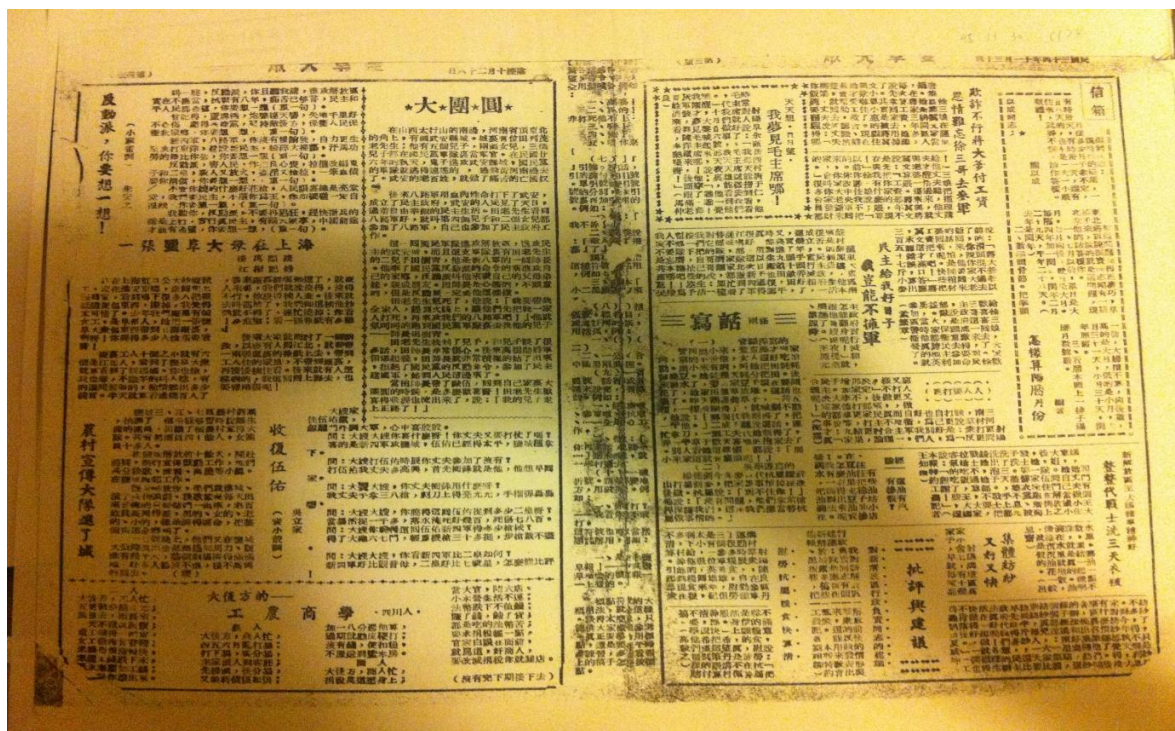
Illustration 1: Yanfu Dazhong (Source: 1944.5.13, p.1, p.4)

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<sup>4</sup> On *Yanfu Dazhong*, April 1943.



Illustration 2: Yanfu Dazhong (Source: 1945.11.30, p.2-3)



feature section, such as the agricultural production tips, appeared in an issue, it usually would have been on these two pages. The fourth page was the entertainment section in each issue. It included jokes, lyrics of folk songs, stories, wall poems, cartoons, and scripts of local plays. The content of this section provided the information local propaganda cadres used to fill in their wall posters, which formed an indirect channel for enhancing the accessibility and popularity of *Yanfu Dazhong*. The newspaper's layout addressed almost all aspects of quotidian rural life and maintained a balance between Communist doctrines and popular interests.

The most important strategy that guaranteed the success of *Yanfu Dazhong* was its adherence to the mass line policy. The editors creatively expanded their staff of reporters to include semi-literate local cadres, party members, activists and even ordinary peasants, and encouraged them to write down reflections from their daily lives and thoughts in informal language. This new form of writing style was named “colloquial writing” (*xiehua*). Although such articles did not have much esthetic value in terms of literature, it significantly lowered the entry level of news reporters and facilitated an unprecedented increase in mass involvement. Newspaper publication, a highly intellectual activity that used to be confined to the elite, was transformed into a mass movement. Newspaper reporting was an esteemed occupation that enjoyed considerable prestige in the local communities. This image inspired ordinary peasants to pick up a pen and envision writing as a channel for prosperity and social mobility. As a result, illiterate people would be motivated to attend basic writing training, which would be provided by Communist administrators. Moreover, in order to get their words published, peasants had to adopt

Communist news report styles, which functioned as a spontaneous indoctrinating process that taught a Communist perception of the world and helped the writer to internalize such perceptions. This process simultaneously enhanced the writer's identity as a newspaper reporter as well as improved their understanding of Communist ideology. It was much like Benedict Anderson's interpretation of the formation of nationalism: the prosperity of print production created an imagined community through the circulation of newspapers, magazines and books, in which people shared common interests, values, knowledge and identities (Anderson 1991). The entire publication of *Yanfu Dazhong*, from the composition of articles and reports, to the type-setting, distribution, and reception of the newspaper, actually created an imagined community for the participants, in which the underlying Communist ideology became the common value. In this sense, this newspaper not only served as propaganda platform, but also played the role of a transcendental organizational apparatus for local Communist movements.

#### **STAGE PLAY ASSOCIATIONS: ITINERANT PROPAGANDA STAGE**

By the outbreak of the War, stage plays (*huaju/wutaiju*) had become a major form of popular entertainment in urban culture as well as a propaganda channel to convey political message. It was especially popular among urban youth and students. When the Resistance War broke out in 1937, instability forced numerous schools to dismiss their students or relocate to the hinterland to continue recruitment. Losing the opportunity for further study and outraged by Japanese atrocities, these students decided to dedicate their efforts to the anti-Japanese cause and many participated in the stage play associations for resistance propaganda. The Nationalist government encouraged such action. After 1937,

it began authorizing local governments to organize these drama associations and send them to rural areas to educate the masses about their patriotic duties. Meanwhile, it required all the existing drama associations to register at the central government's Social Ministry or the Third Office of the Political Ministry, which were in charge of cultural issues. The ministries would then review the participants' *curriculum vitae* so that the government could screen out Communists or pro-leftists, who might take advantage of this opportunity to disseminate Communist or anti-Nationalist ideas. According to the GMD's investigation of cultural activities in 1941, there were altogether 1,013 such associations performing in most of China's territory including, Xinjiang and Tibet (Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan 1991).<sup>5</sup> The CCP certainly would not give up their control over this arena. In fact, stage play associations had become one of the most efficient channels of spreading Communist ideology in base areas of Jiangsu.

Wartime Communist drama associations developed in three stages. The first stage paralleled the beginning of the War when the CCP and its New Fourth Army were still engaged in expanding their sphere of influence and territories, and therefore, could not spare enough manpower to organize drama associations directly. However, thanks to the Party's successful anti-Japanese propaganda, which associated the Party with the resistance in the mind of the public and especially among the educated youth, a considerable portion of association members were leftists or held pro-Communist attitudes. This situation largely facilitated the Party's later penetration and control. For

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<sup>5</sup> Although it is not specified in the document, I believe this figure does not include the drama associations in the Communist base areas.

instance, when the Japanese invaded Jiangsu from Xuzhou in the winter of 1937, the principal of Hecun Elementary School (located in Tongshan County, the greater Xuzhou area of Jiangsu) organized young teachers and staff to form the “Hecun salvage stage play group.” This drama group was composed of eleven male and seven female members and mobilized resistance in the border area of Jiangsu, Anhui and Henan (Zhang Qixiu 1987). In Donghai County (north Jiangsu), local educated youngsters initiated a resistance association called “youth salvation group” in the spring of 1938. Their activities included teaching resistance theories and songs, posting slogans, and convening conferences and military training classes. They received financial support from the local Nationalist government. Participants were required to explain their understanding of the United Front when registering for the group. Due to its openly Communist inclination, the local government dismissed the “youth salvation group.” In response, the core members organized the “salvage stage play group” to continue their resistance propaganda in the local community (Pan Ying 1985). Although not directly led by the Party, these spontaneously developing drama groups showed a clear preference for Communist theories. Their considerable influence further enticed the Party to include them in its political agenda.

In the early 1940s, the Party began to take a leading role in organizing stage play associations. In the spring of 1939, the NFA entered Jiangsu province and established the first base area in Maoshan (south Jiangsu) and set up a drama office under the propaganda team of the Susan Special Committee, which was in charge of composing drama scripts and arranging public performances. Once the NFA arrived in a newly



opened area, the drama office would set up a stage play performance for the local people, vividly enumerating the Party's principles and shortening its psychological distance with the masses (Li Jian 1984). At the end of 1940, the NFA launched its East Expedition and established the Suzhong Regional Base. At the same time the party branch of Nantong County Middle School was assigned to organize a performing team under the guise of winter vocation training classes. Activist students responded enthusiastically (Chen Jun 1993). Finally, the local party recruited about fifty members ranging in age from fourteen to nineteen, most of whom were local youth and students. Educated youth from Shanghai wished to devote themselves to the Communist resistance cause made up a small portion of the group as well (Xu Ke 1993). After Chen Yi and his NFA troops reunited with the Eighth Route Army column led by Huang Kecheng in Yancheng (north Jiangsu) in October 1940, the NFA established the Subei Regional Base. This military reunion was strategically significant because it connected the northern Communist border regions with the base areas in central China. During this time, high-ranking leaders paid special attention to cultural and artistic activities. For example, the central China branch of Luxun Art College was established in February 1941. This college later became a major center of human resources for the Subei Cultural Work Group founded in 1942, and other official and semi-official, lower level, drama associations. Like other regional bases in Jiangsu, these organizations also recruited educated youth from the Yangtze Delta. In the following two years, the nine counties of the Yanfu District gradually established their own cultural work groups, each of which reached about thirty members (Liu Zexian 1987b).

As part of the third phase in the development of the drama associations, the Party paralleled its deep penetration into local communities and people's daily lives by reinforcing the mass line policy through popular entertainment near the end of the War. The Party encouraged mass participation in the drama associations and helped peasants to found their own centers for local performances in towns and villages. In Baoying County (central Jiangsu), the propagandists began to teach folk songs and local operas, which had set conventional tunes to new lyrics, to youngsters in winter schools in 1943. These songs soon became popular among young people, who spread them to their families and sang them in daily life. Under such circumstances, the winter school teachers and propagandists selected qualified youngsters who were fond of cultural activities and organized them into entertaining groups in Baishu, Lijia, Guhe, Yijia and Qiaotou villages. These entertaining groups began regularly performing in festivals, public gatherings and even the fields and the streets, and received enthusiastic responses from villagers. Later, these groups gradually transformed into larger-scale peasant drama associations and began to perform skits that reflected peasants' daily life and thoughts. Youngsters in nearby villages and towns, such as Shuangxi, Lanting, Wanglu, Gaoxia, and Guangyang, volunteered to establish their own drama associations in the local communities. The party leaders of Shenan Sub-district selected the leaders in the peasant drama associations in subordinate towns and formed the county association in 1944. Due to its expanding influence and well-received performances, this association was upgraded to the county level and renamed "Baoying County Peasant Drama Corps." The county administration assigned some drama activists from other sub-districts to strengthen the



corps and established a party branch among its members. Under the supervision of the party branch, the drama corps set up a regular schedule for political study and democratic colloquiums in which members exchanged their thoughts and conducted self and mutual criticism (Cai Jiaju 1987). Through these studies and colloquiums the Party intended to reinforce the principle that all propaganda and cultural activities should serve workers, peasants, soldiers and the ongoing warfare.

These drama associations did more than stage plays. In an attempt to ensure good local receptions, their performances included various local operas, such as Huai tunes, Subei folk tunes, Yangzhou talk shows and etc. Actors and actresses spoke in local dialects when performing in communities and in mandarin Chinese for the NFA. The plays generally fell into two categories. The first category included works that revised classical plays. The Dazhong Drama Corps of Fourth District of Suzhong Regional Base revised one traditional Beijing opera play, originally titled “Hitting Drum and Cursing Cao Cao (*Jigu Ma Cao*).” Renamed “Hitting Drum and Cursing Wang Jingwei (*Dagu Ma Wang*),” the new version attacked Wang’s collaborationist government and called for people to resist the Japanese. Another popular play, *The Heroine (Jinguo Yingxiong)*, was a revised version of a Beijing opera, *Hua Mulan*.<sup>6</sup> The play told a story of a family that was patriotic and progressive. The parents were outraged by the Japanese atrocities and hoped to contribute to the resistance cause. However, they did not have sons to send to the battle against the Japanese. Knowing her parents’ regret, the eldest daughter decided

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<sup>6</sup> *Hua Mulan* is a fictional figure in a long poem written in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). It tells a story of a girl who joined the army under her father’s name.

to join the army and shoulder the responsibility for defending her country (Shen Qian 1993). Although all the actors and actresses were amateurs and the lyrics were not as well polished as traditional Beijing operas, these plays were still met with enthusiastic responses from the audience because they so closely reflected ordinary life.

The other category of plays consisted of newly composed scripts reflecting the status of the Resistance War. “Sorrow of the Blind and Deaf (*Mang Ya Hen*)” was a play that the Dazhong Drama Group of the Sunan Regional Base prepared especially for the third anniversary of the “8.13” incident and the establishment of the People’s Self-defense Team in Changshu County.<sup>7</sup> In this play, a family with a blind father, and a deaf son and a daughter escape from their hometown during the Japanese invasion. Despite extraordinarily miserable life experiences, they survive by singing on the street. Their hardships reminded the audience of their own sufferings after the Japanese intrusion. The performance always ended with the audiences’ recitation of anti-Japanese slogans (Jiang Xu 1984). When the New Fourth Army Incident occurred, the Jiangnan Drama Corps immediately produced a dancing play named “Doomsday of the Puppet” (*kuilei de mori*). The play accused the Nationalist government of attempting to collaborate with Japan and scheming to annihilate the NFA in Anhui. In the middle of the play, it began to rain. The actors took advantage of the weather condition claiming that the sudden rain showed the sympathy of the heavenly god towards the unjustly treated NFA. The audience was so moved by the play that they stood in the rain until the end of the performance (Jiang Xu 1984).

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<sup>7</sup> On August 13, 1937, the Japanese army attacked Shanghai and began its offensive on the Yangtze Delta.

The most popular play was “Lay down Your Whip” (*Fangxia ni de bianzi*), which appeared in the catalogue of almost every drama association. In 1931, an elementary school teacher, Chen Liting, composed the script to attack the corrupt Nationalist government. The story was about two refugees, an old man and his daughter, who are driven from their hometown by the oppression of covetous landlords and a tyrannical government. To make a living, the old man forces his daughter to perform acrobatics. One day, he is outraged by her poor performance and wants to beat her. A younger worker stops the old man by shouting “lay down your whip!” Surprisingly, the daughter defends her father and attributes their miserable lives to the exploitation of the landlord class supported by the corrupt government. The play did not really become a hit among the public until Chen revised his script, setting his protagonists’ hometown in Manchuria and indirectly shifting the theme from anti-Nationalists to anti-Japanese. The old man and his daughter then flee their hometown not because of an oppressive government, but because of the brutal Japanese invasion. The confrontation between the two classes—ordinary peasants and landlords, the oppressed and the oppressors—was converted to that between two nations: Japan and China. The play conveyed its thematic message via one of the protagonist’s lines: “If we do not unite quickly to defend ourselves against Japanese aggression, we will soon meet the same fate as our countrymen in Manchuria (Hung Chang-tai 1994, 60).”

The climax usually occurred at the moment when the old man swung the whip to hit his daughter and was stopped by the young worker. Usually, the audience was totally outraged by the old man’s brutality. Because this play sometimes was performed on the

street, the old man would at times be stopped not only by the young worker, but also by angry audience members. The younger worker soon revealed that they were actually daughter and father: “Don’t blame him, he is Xiangjie’s (the girl) father. They have run away from Manchuria and barely had enough to eat. They cannot live on...” The audience was deeply surprised by the relationship between the beater and the beaten, and then realized that it was the Japanese intrusion that caused such a distorted relationship. As a person remarked after watching the performance of the students of Qiushen Middle School (Rudong County, Suzhong regional base), “what if the Japanese occupied our town (Gu Bin 1993)!” This was the exact reaction these plays intended to arouse in hopes that fear would strengthen their resolution against the Japanese.

Another important characteristic of the stage play associations’ performances was its ability to instantly tailor its plays to the movements and messages the Party planned to propagandize in local communities. When rent and interest reduction was launched, plays such as “Reducing Rent Anyway” (*Zhaojian buwu*) and “Fake Reduction” (*Mingjian anbujuan*) were continuously performed all over villages and towns. These plays revealed the tricks that some landlords played during the movement to evade rent reduction. They also served as typical lessons to help local cadres identify similar plots. In order to publicize the benefits of rent reduction, the members of the peasant drama association of Baoying County composed new lyrics for the popular folk tune “Oil Peddler” (*Baiyou lang*), which became “Rent Reduction Is Good” (*Jianzu hao*). It sang:

I have a word, for you gentlemen; rent reduction is a law, which has to be obeyed;  
you have to know, rent reduction is not merely for tenants; it is for resistance

against the Japs, to unite tenants and landlords; [if] tenants are doing well, they fight the Japs more bravely; your rent would be guaranteed; you should remember, the Two Yellow fleeced a lot; thanks to local militia, we can enjoy the peace... (Cai Jiaju 1987)<sup>8</sup>

During the annual season of conscription, local drama associations performed “Go Join the Army” (*Qu canjun*), “Red Nose Joining the Army” (*Hong bizi canjun*), “Model Father” (*Mofan Fuqin*) and “Granny Cui Sending Sons for Conscription” (*Cui da nainai songzi canjun*) to encourage young people to join the NFA. The local cadres of the Yanfu District admitted that people were easier to mobilize in places where the masses had watched such plays. Several youngsters of Xinhe Town, Dong Liangwen and his fellows, volunteered to register for conscription on the site where the cultural work group performed “Model Father” (Liu Zexian 1987b).

Drama associations also made efforts to undermine conventional stereotypes of women and tried to increase their domestic and social status. Stage performance needed both actors and actresses. However, the latter were not easy to recruit. Sometimes actors had to play female roles because of the shortage of actresses. Actresses faced criticism from both their own families and the local communities. The majority of people considered it a disgrace for women to perform under the gaze of male audience members. When the Dazhong Drama Corps of Juzhen prepared to put “Female Heroes” on stage, they found that the actress, Ji Zhongyin, who played the leading role, had disappeared. It was soon discovered that her father had locked her up, refusing to allow her to perform in public. Finally, she escaped, rejoined the corps and left her family and hometown.

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<sup>8</sup> “Two Yellow” was the nick name of the collaborating force in the local communities of Jiangsu.

Although the higher authority openly praised Ji for her revolutionary behavior, she never obtained her family's forgiveness (Shen Qian 1993). This was by no means a rare incident. In Guanyun County (north Jiangsu), when a local drama association was putting on "Angry Shout of an Ancient Town" (*Gucheng de nuhou*), a woman suddenly cried out during the performance. She was the mother of the female actress, Tang Shuhong, on the stage, who was playing the role of a middle-age widow who had a son. Tang's mother cried and shouted, "You damned! You have not even married yet and now you let people call you 'Mom'? How disgraceful it is! I am not doing well and you are cursing your mom on the stage. Do you want me to die early?" Tang's neighbors called her "night fox" (*yehu*), a derogatory term for women. Under such circumstances, her father and grandfather ordered her to stay at home, but this revolutionary young woman ignored their wishes (Tang Mingxia 1984). Criticizing gender discrimination and promoting equality, the Subei Cultural Work Group composed a script called "Liu Guiying Is a Big Red Flower" and put it on stage in 1944. The protagonist, Liu Guiying, is a female model worker and plans to join the local dancing team to take part in Communist cultural activities. However, her mother-in-law regards her participation in these activities as a humiliation to the family and forbids it. With the help of the local women resistance association and other young women in her village, she eventually frees herself from her family's control and joins the dancing team (Liu Zexian 1987b). This play was widely influential in the Subei Regional Base and received enthusiastic applauses from young people. Nevertheless, the older generation continued their prejudice against women's participation outside the domestic arena.

By encouraging amateur participation, these drama associations transformed stage plays from a form of urban elitist art into a folk entertainment. According to the registers of the official-sponsored drama associations, more than ninety percent of the participants did not have professional training before acting in the association's dramas (Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan 1991, 33-146).<sup>9</sup> In order to survive in a tough wartime environment, stage plays adopted a simpler style of performance that was more accessible to the public. First of all, plays were no longer performed in theatres. Instead, actors began to perform in teahouses, on festival stages, or even on the street. Actors and their audience were no longer separated by the conventional form, in which costumed actors and actresses performed on a backlit stage. The intermingling of actors and audience created a friendly and intimate atmosphere that permitted actors and playwrights to convey their ideas more effectively. This explains why some audience members often spontaneously blocked the father's hand when he wanted to hit his daughter during the playing of "Lay down Your Whip."

In 1939, a script writer on Rudong's political works team (later the Suzhong Regional Base), Shi Bai, wrote a five-scene drama named "The Growth of the Guerrilla." It told the story of a people's spontaneous resistance against Japan: the Japanese set up Xu Er to make him an opium-smoker and use the continuing supply of opium to exchange Xu's loyalty as head of the local collaborationist association. They further threaten to kill Xu's own daughter, who had dared to offend the Japanese. Under these circumstances, Xu agrees to collaborate and he helps the Japanese ruthlessly exploit the

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<sup>9</sup> This statistics is an estimation based on these registration documents.

masses. Meanwhile, during the Japanese atrocities, Grandpa Cao and his family, including his thirteen-year-old grandson “little rabbit”, have volunteered to help organize a guerrilla force to defend their local community against the Japanese. They set up a trap to poison Xu and contact the collaborationist forces’ pro-resistance soldiers for intelligence on the Japanese troops’ military maneuvers. Eventually, the guerrillas successfully ambush the Japanese, but “little rabbit” dies in the fight. The play ended in the masses’ resolution to expand the guerrilla force to revenge “little rabbit.” The vivid images of the characters--the brutality of the Japanese, the bravery of “little rabbit” and Grandpa Cao’s care for his grandson and resolute resistance--particularly appealed to the audience. The team performed in the district and received an overwhelming welcome from the local people. They had to consecutively perform the play for almost a week to meet the audience’s demands.

In the first scene, a Japanese military head sexually harassed Xu’s daughter and the girl refused him. Consequently, he ordered Xu to shoot his own daughter. Xu certainly did not have the heart to kill her, but, since he had received a direct order from the Japanese, he could do nothing but tremblingly raise the gun. The scene ended at that moment, when the audience could not help shouting “kill the Japs!” and “down with Japanese imperialism!” Another climax occurred near the end of the last scene when the seriously wounded “little rabbit” murmured “we won...” and his hand slowly slid down with an unfinished cookie. Once Grandpa Cao tremblingly fell on little rabbit’s body and cried out “my...little...rabbit...,” female audience could not hold back their tears and the masses shouted “revenge for little rabbit!” and “fight the Japs to the end (Gu Bin 1993)!”



At this moment, there was no line between on and off stage; the audience had internalized the writer's intentions and underlying message. In this sense, the drama associations linked propagandists and the masses via the plays, which created a smooth channel through which the latter's emotions could be efficiently manipulated.

Meanwhile, costumes and stage settings were largely simplified. Actresses put white and red color powder on their faces as make-up. When the itinerant propaganda group of the First District of Sunan played *Zheng Chenggong* in the local communities, the group members had to use the clothes on the temple statues and adjusted them to fit the play's costumes (Jiang Xu 1984). When the Fuxiao Drama Group was going to perform "The Field" (*yuanye*), a work by the famous playwright Cao Yu, they encountered the difficulty of reconstructing a running train scene. After numerous experiments and consultations with the masses, they moved several strips of discarded railway onto the stage and wrapped them with earth colored cloth. Then, covering the railway with dirt, they successfully recreated the image of a railway for the audience. They were also able to imitate the sound of the train by piling up two empty barrels and knocking them with two abacuses in certain rhythms. With the help of the masses, the association members recreated the blue sky and white clouds on stage despite poor quality lighting equipment (Gao Weijin et al 1983). Although such simple stage settings could not compare to those in urban theatres, they actually were more suitable for the role that these popular stage plays fulfilled in the agenda of Communist propaganda. The poor stage settings and amateur actors shortened the psychological distance between

performers and audiences, which made the underlying content of these plays more easily accepted and internalized by the masses.

Drama associations not only served as propaganda apparatus but also functioned as an itinerant popular party branch that mobilized and organized the masses. The Xin'an Itinerant Drama Group is an ideal example. It was established in the Xin'an Elementary School in Huai'an County (north Jiangsu) in October 1935 under the influence of the Party and in order to promote anti-Japanese discourse. It originally had fourteen members, whose ages ranged from twelve to seventeen years old. Led by their principal, Wang Dazhi, the group claimed to practice the education theory of Tao Xingzhi: "life is education and society is school", and toured China publicizing the resistance. Before finally settling down in the Subei Regional Base in 1941, they traveled through almost half of hinterland, including Yunnan, Guizhou and Gansu. Although Xin'an Group was not founded by the Party, its members admired Communist theories, and its activities were under the Party's close supervision. During their trip, some elder members secretly sent a representative, Xu Zhiguang, to Qingyang (Shan-Gan-Ning border region) in order to establish a party branch within the group. Gradually, most of the original members were assimilated into the Party. The Party's infiltration extended the Xin'an Group's focus from cultural propaganda to organizing children via popular entertainment. When the entire Xin'an Group arrived in Subei in January 1942, its members included more than sixty people, and the youngest member was less than ten years old. Therefore, they became the most suitable candidates to approach local children and spread Communist doctrines. When Chen Yi and Liu Shaoqi met the group members in person, in March

1942, both Chen and Liu appreciated the significance of such itinerant drama groups for propaganda and organization purposes. Chen further encouraged the group members, “You should not only be responsible for the organization of the youth and children of Subei, but also take charge of that of the entire central China (Zhang Mu 1985).” Apparently, Chen cherished the group’s influence more as an organizational apparatus than a propaganda team.

Drama associations were important in the party propaganda framework not merely because they provided a new form of popular entertainment to spread the Party’s political influence. More importantly, they created a platform for mass participation in Communist cultural activities, through which the party personnel and the masses were closely intertwined, just like the “colloquial writing” of *Yanfu Dazhong*. The Party successfully infiltrated the leisure time of ordinary people by providing Communist popular entertainment forms that replaced traditional ones. This effort helped to incorporate people’s private lives into the Communist cultural construction, and thus expanded the reach of the new party-state. Meanwhile, the participants in these drama associations spontaneously nurtured their identities as Communist cultural workers and portrayed their understanding of current local, domestic and international events within the Party’s ideological framework. This reflected the essence of Communist propaganda work, and, the key to its success—it always connected propaganda with organization arrangements. Propaganda could not have been transformed into substantial development without organizational measures. According to the statistical data from Binhai County (Subei Regional Base), there were altogether forty-seven village cultural work teams and

965 team members by the end of 1943. These teams had performed 269 times that year and the number of audience members had reached more than 162,900 persons (Zhang Yabin 1986). The wide-spread village drama associations exemplified the essence of this propaganda-organization combination.

#### **REWARD AND PUNISHMENT: ASSIMILATION OF COLLABORATIONIST PERSONNEL**

Propaganda aimed at the collaborationist forces was another major component in the Party's quotidian struggles. Jiangsu Province was the stronghold of the Nationalists before the War and became the political heart of Japan and Wang Jingwei's collaborationist government after the Nationalist authority withdrew to Chongqing. Under the order of Chiang Kai-shek, the development of the NFA was confined to the south of the Yangtze River before 1940. It was the weakest force in the power competition between, the Japanese, the collaborationist forces, and the Nationalists. Direct military confrontation with the other three obviously would not have been a wise choice. Due to limited military strength, the Japanese had to rely on recruiting collaborationist forces to maintain control over the local population. The condescending attitude and atrocities of the Japanese made collaborationist soldiers reluctant to side with the intruders. Hence, the assimilation of the collaborationist forces became a major method for the Party to disintegrate the enemy from within.

The Party proposed four basic principles of "equal importance" in dealing with collaborationist forces. First of all, assimilation was as equally important as disintegration. The Party regarded political persuasion the best choice to win over collaborationist officers and soldiers. However, when faced with stubborn targets, the

party cadres would encourage their subordinates to kill the officers in an uprising. Second, political persuasion was as equally important as military offensives. The relatively weak strength of the NFA meant the Party had to rely heavily on political persuasion to undermine collaborationist forces. However, this did not prevent the NFA from engaging in sporadic military maneuvers when reliable intelligence reports could guarantee victory in order to highlight their potential power to deter their opponents. Third, higher-ranking assimilation was declared to be as equally important as lower ranking incorporation. Although assimilation focusing on lower-ranking personnel was relatively easy to achieve since they mostly came from the oppressed classes, converting higher-ranking officers brought more political, military and financial resources to the NFA, and caused more damage to the enemy. Fourth, propaganda was just as important as organization (Li Long 1941, 196-200). The effect of political persuasion was largely determined by that of propaganda and organizational arrangements, which composed another major content of works towards collaborationist forces.

Compared with propaganda channels that focused on the masses, those channels that targeted collaborationist forces were relatively limited and conventional due to the smaller chance of accessing the target. There were mainly two methods to encourage the soldiers to turn against the Japanese. The first was to directly agitate their emotions by shouting slogans in battlefields. Here is a list of such slogans used by the NFA and local military forces in the Sunan Regional Base:

Hey! Do not shoot!  
Shoot your gun to the sky!  
Chinese do not fight Chinese!

Do no help the Japanese; do not fight your own fellows!  
Do not trust the Japs!  
Rise up with guns; reward you with benefits! (Li Long 1941, 203)”

In addition, the propaganda workers passed out leaflets, posted them on walls and hung them in the streets where the objectives might be passing by. These pamphlets explained current public and military affairs and encouraged collaborationist forces to rise against the Japanese. The following are some example of such written slogans:

[if you] follow Wang Jingwei, [you will] be a traitor and slave for your whole life!  
The Japs have retreated; do you want to be a free person or a slave?  
Lots of collaborationist soldiers have joined uprisings; do you want to fall behind?  
China and Japan have reached a stalemate; the Japs are going to lose the war!  
We reward all captured soldiers and officers!  
The Japs do not trust you; [they do] not give you enough bullets; [they] only want you to be scapegoats!  
Converted forces will not be dismissed or merged.  
The ones who want real peace have to drive the Japs out of China! (Li Long 1941, 202)

A close examination of these two types of slogans reveals that the national conflict was the major issue used to inspire antagonistic emotions among the collaborating soldiers against their Japanese superiors. However, such propaganda did not reach the level of nationalism, or defending the country. It hovered over the issue of their personal interests by emphasizing their difference from the Japanese, who only treated them as scapegoats and puppets. This strategy was in accordance with the Party’s evaluation of collaborationist personnel, who, it believed, held low political consciousness but were sensitive to promises of personal benefits. Such perceptions led to another important

characteristic of the propaganda toward collaborationist forces—material rewards for the uprising troops.

In order to achieve the most extensive support, the Party maintained a generous attitude towards captives and soldiers and officers who rose against the Japanese. Captives were supposed to be treated with respect, similar to one's own brothers. Those who were willing to join the Communist forces were welcome and those who chose to return home received transportation fees. Some of the returnees were promoted to advantageous positions if they had useful social connections for Communist development. Higher-ranking officers were guaranteed that their teams would not be disbanded if they exchanged their loyalty to the Party. For those who volunteered to leave the collaborationist forces for the NFA, the Party offered considerable rewards. In the Sunan Regional Base, collaborationist soldiers who left with one rifle received more than thirty *yuan*, those with one light machine gun received 150 *yuan*, and those with one heavy machine gun were rewarded with 300 *yuan*. They would not be punished for their collaboration with the Japanese as long as no significant crimes had been committed (Li Long 1941, 198-200). These policies were attractive for those who collaborated with the Japanese because of military threats, especially those with dependents in Communist regions.

Although the Party strenuously strived to break up family attachments and reinforce vertical loyalty, it never hesitated to take advantage of familial bonds to facilitate its own agenda. In the case of assimilating collaborationist personnel, the soldiers' dependents functioned as a key channel of communication and control for the

Party. It indirectly sought to convert collaborationist forces by approaching, educating, and organizing their dependents after establishing firm control in the local communities. First of all, the Party conducted open or secret investigations to figure out who were the dependents of collaborators and registered them accordingly. For instance, in the Suzhong Regional Base, the government implemented registration with the assistance of local mass associations. The registration form had three copies, which was kept in the town, sub-district and county governments respectively for record-keeping purposes (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei chenggong bu 1945b, 400-401). Meanwhile, the Party created an atmosphere that despised any collaborators and mobilized the masses to report suspicious behaviors and figures to local authorities. However, such registration inevitably aroused doubts and panic among collaborationist dependents, and even large-scale desertions from the base areas, especially in the early period.

In order to counteract these negative influences and convince the dependents to side with the Party, the local government explained its lenient policies toward voluntary returnees and repeatedly described the Japanese atrocities via public and private channels. According to the registration list, local cadres ordered the dependents to hold regular meetings. During the meetings, converted collaborationist soldiers and officers were invited to give speeches to the participants detailing their own miserable experiences serving in collaborationist forces. In addition, prestigious figures from the neighborhoods also joined in the persuasive efforts, which relied on local authorities to pressure the dependents. Meanwhile, local cadres paid personal visits to the dependents who were not able to attend regular dependent meetings for medical or other excuses (Zhonggong



suzhong qu dangwei chenggong bu 1945b, 401-402). These personal visits created an intimacy between the Party and the dependents, which facilitated the latter's conversion.

Family attachment, moreover, was used to make emotional appeals to collaborationist personnel to join the CCP. The content of posters usually focused on mothers or wives missing their sons or husbands who had gone away with the collaborationist forces. The Communist propagandists filled anti-Japanese lyrics into popular folk tunes in order to make the Chinese soldiers and officers homesick. Here is the lyric of a typical revised folk song, "Old Mother Persuades the Collaborationist force (*laomu quan weijun*),"

The son is serving in the collaborationist force in town, and the mother at home  
was really worried;  
Japs were ruthless animals, holding a knife to kill people without a blink;  
I am hoping my son comes back, and the whole family is waiting;  
You are a good Chinese man, and you should love your home country;  
Make your decision earlier, and there is more glory in returning with your gun  
(Zhang Yabing 1986).

During the mid-autumn festival of 1944, which was celebrated with family reunions, Binhai Count's propaganda team took advantage of the holiday to pass out posters with such popular lyrics in places where collaborationist forces were stationed. At midnight, the team sent out its most musical members to sing the songs on the posters that were put up during the daytime. On Huaihe Bridge, the team creatively organized collaborationist dependents to sing the songs to soldiers and officers. Since they easily recognized the voices of their family members, there were altogether more than ten collaborationist

soldiers who secretly escaped for their homes in the base area that night (Zhang Yabing 1986).

Under the emotional persuasion of the Communists and the military threat from the Japanese troops, more and more collaborationists began switching sides. These conditions propelled the Party to develop the “one-two-one” policy, which allowed people to retain their positions in the collaborationist troops and governments but actually work for the Party. “One-two-one” was a metaphor that described the psychological path these people experienced: from working for the Japanese with one heart, to oscillating between two sides, to finally following the Party with their full heart. The success of this policy not only depended on the overwhelming propaganda targeting the collaborators and the development of the Communist political and military strength, but also resided in local cadres’ ability to manipulate and control the converted persons.

Although the Party worked hard to assimilate collaborationist personnel in order to strengthen its influence, it did not really trust these converts. They were derogatorily referred to as “double dealers” (*liangmianpai*) in most internally circulated party documents. In a working report of the Suzhong Regional Base, the local party branch generally divided them into four categories. The first one was economic-interest-pursuing “double dealers,” who did not hold political biases towards the CCP and worked for the Japanese merely to pursue economic interests. The Party usually tolerated their exploitation as long as they did not significantly endanger the benefits of the masses. Meanwhile, it sought to exploit conflicts between such “double dealers” and their Japanese superiors, through which they strengthened the reliance and support of the

Party. The second category was the “double dealers” with feudal backgrounds, i.e. the landlord class. They surrendered to the Japanese to protect their own interests while not sincerely favoring collaboration. Relying on the Japanese authorities, they sometimes resisted against the Communist policies, such as rent reduction. The Party thereby took advantage of their anti-Japanese inclination when both parties had common benefits. The last two kinds were generally categorized by their political tendency. One was “revolutionary double dealers,” who were deeply influenced by Communist ideology and selected by the masses or threatened by the Japanese into working for the collaborationist government. The other was called “anti-revolutionary double dealers,” and firmly suppressed by the Party if detected because they worked for the Nationalist government, even if they shared the common goal of resisting Japan (Hong Ze 1945, 454-457).

To ensure the success of the assimilation of “double dealers,” the Party relied on mass participation to observe and report on the collaborationist personnel. It mobilized ordinary peasants to report good deeds or misbehaviors of the collaborators in local communities, and recorded them with red and black points respectively. This red-black point project, as it was called, was another concrete example of the way that the Party transformed its daily work into a mass movement, and further reinforced its influence at the organizational level.

The red-black point project took advantage of the prevailing traditional thought, “reward for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds,” among the masses to justify itself and win popular support. This project was launched under the name of the NFA or the local government near the end of the War, when the resistance military forces began to

obtain strategic advantage in the battlefield. By this time, the Communist authorities had established firm control over the local communities through years of penetration and had obtained a general roster of the local collaborationist personnel, which served as a prerequisite for this project. Meanwhile, the NFA and different levels of government sent out investigating cadres to collect relevant information about the collaborators on a regular basis, lead the surveillance efforts that observed the targeted, and report the red-black records to the higher military and administrative offices each month. It was required that each sub-district and township office and mass association assign a specific cadre to take charge of this project. Hence, the Party was able to obtain full knowledge and keep up to date with any developments.

The Party prescribed clear definitions for good and bad deeds. The good ones included:

- (1) Preventing Japanese or collaborationist forces from burning, killing, raping and plundering, and secretly releasing drafts, corvee;
- (2) Protecting arrested resistance cadres and releasing or covering resistance staff and their families;
- (3) Organizing collective conversion or turning over with weapons;
- (4) Shooting towards the sky when one encountered the NFA and the Eighth Route Army (ERA) or voluntarily turning over in battlefield;
- (5) Sending true messages to the anti-Japanese government, the NFA or the ERA;
- (6) Assisting the NFA or the ERA to overcome or eradicate the Japanese or collaborationist spots;
- (7) Clarifying rumors spread by the Japanese or the collaborators and helping with the propaganda of the anti-Japanese government;
- (8) Persuading others to do the above deeds;
- (9) Voluntarily reporting others' good or bad deeds to the NFA, ERA or their local agencies (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei chenggong bu 1945a, 394-395).

Bad deeds were described as followed:

- (1) Blackmailing, plundering, kidnapping, raping, burning, killing, and helping the Japanese to extort, draft or harass the masses;
- (2) Killing or harassing resistance personnel or their families;
- (3) Fighting the resistance forces or defending the Japanese spots;
- (4) Propagandizing for the Japanese and collaborators, or against the anti-Japanese government and the NFA;
- (5) Helping the Japanese to mop-up and set up spots, encouraging collaboration and endangering the resistance regional bases (393-394).

Each act of misconduct or good deed would be recorded in detail in the “book of crime” or “book of leniency,” and marked with 1 to 3 black or red points depending on its significance. The responsible office established a profile for each collaborator. Once one’s black points reached thirty points, his name would be added to the “book of death,” which symbolized the government’s authority to execute him at any time. Correspondingly, when one’s red points reached ten, his name would be written down in the “book of birth,” and his citizenship would be retained; if one’s red points reached twenty, he would be praised in public or rewarded with some benefits (393-395).

The long existing traditional knowledge of pay backs and rewards in ordinary peasants’ minds and their hatred for the Japanese atrocities made it easy for the Party to legitimize the red-black point project in the public eye. Since local party branches cooperated with mass associations to implement the project, ordinary peasants soon became involved in the surveillance. When faced with collaborationist personnel, the Party launched an innovative “chatting and whispering” movement to spread the messages of the red-black point project through peddlers and merchants who went back and forth between the base areas and the Japanese occupied regions and had regular communication with the targets. Such messages included “watch your behaviors; there were red-black billboards in the countryside and red-black points on streets,” “now one

cannot do bad deeds; [your] head would be removed once [your] black points reach thirty;" and "[one can] not live longer than half a year if [one] gets black points (396-397)." These messages were usually conveyed in daily conversations without arousing much Japanese attention.

This project effectively contained the behaviors of collaborators for the following reasons. First of all, the Japanese military forces had fallen into a disadvantageous position on the battlefield and its retreat had become inevitable. Meanwhile, the Party had obtained substantial control over its base areas after a long period of effective penetration. Second, the Party successfully transformed this project into a mass movement via the various mass associations in local communities. The expanding scale of the movement created an atmosphere of collective surveillance, which largely facilitated the Party's manipulation and control over its targets. Third, this project served as an effective system to reinforce the propaganda function on the organizational level. The Party assigned specific cadres to investigate, record and supervise the implementation of the project and publicized the rewards and punishments collaborators received on a regular basis. Such measures turned abstract propaganda into concrete organizational results, which helped the masses conceptualize the true intentions of the Communist movement.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examine both the general guidelines of the Communist propaganda and how these guidelines resulted in concrete mass movements and projects that targeted ordinary people as well as collaborationist personnel in the base areas of

Jiangsu. Although the lack of direct evidence makes it difficult to evaluate how the propaganda campaigns discussed above were received by ordinary people, one can make a reasonable estimation based on the local conditions. Stage plays were the most effective method to convey the Party's messages considering the low literacy level in the base areas. Furthermore, they were usually performed in the form of local dramas, such as *huaiju*, which had already been a popular entertainment form before the CCP came. The local cadres found that people were easier to mobilize for rent reduction, conscription and other movements in places where propaganda stage plays were regularly performed (Liu Zexian 1987b). The "colloquial writing" largely inspired youngsters to attend reading classes and other Communist campaigns, and some of these amateur reporters later became the first generation of PRC journalists. However, confined to the literacy level of the peasantry, these writings were less effective compared with stage plays. The assimilation of collaborationist personnel might be the least successful project among the three. Its results were not only determined by the effectiveness of propaganda activities, but also intertwined with personal interests, social status, and the power bargain between the CCP and the Japanese. That also explained why the red-black point project exerted a more intimidating impact on the "double dealers" near the end of the War.

On the basis of personal memoirs and the working reports of local cadres, I have analyzed the publication of *Yanfu Dazhong*, the activities of the peasant drama associations, and the red-black point project to demonstrate the propagandists' quotidian operation at the village and town levels, which previous studies have hardly touched. More importantly, unlike those which view Communist propaganda projects solely as a

form of popular culture (Hung Chang-tai 1994) or attribute their success to their skillful operations (Jin Dakai 1954), I have conceptualized Communist propaganda activities as both a cultural and organizational construction established on the basis of preexisting customs, values, kinship and social networks in local communities. Such sophisticated accommodation to local knowledge also explains the effectiveness and popularity of these propaganda activities.

In terms of propaganda, the Party's goal was never limited to spreading its indoctrination, but rather it sought much deeper penetration into local communities. First, it changed the conventional publicizing pattern of author-reader/player-audience relationships by calling for mass participation, as demonstrated by the "colloquial writing" in *Yanfu Dazhong* and efforts to organize peasant performances of stage plays, which encouraged the interaction between propagandists and their subjects and the internalization of indoctrinated ideas by the latter. Second, the Party wisely reinforced the abstract advantages their successful propaganda earned through concrete organizational channels. At the same time that newspapers featured "colloquial writing," the peasant drama association staged plays and the red-black point project kept tabs on collaborators, the CCP gradually set up its branches and regular meeting system among the participants, nurturing their collective identity as members of the Communist movement. In this sense, these propaganda activities functioned as another form of organization in the cultural arena. Finally, together with other ongoing Communist campaigns (education, rectification and so on, see discussions in later chapters), the Party endeavored to build a new political culture that immersed itself in almost every aspect of peasants' quotidian



life. It encouraged ordinary people to become accustomed to the propagandized ideologies, perceptions, and theories, and use them to interpret their surroundings, experiences, the current warfare and the imminent CCP-GMD power struggle.

## Chapter Four Education: Another Channel of Mass Mobilization

As a party whose ultimate goal was a nationwide revolution to overthrow the current regime, the CCP placed a high premium on the significance of education. The Party's education system served its wartime mobilization efforts in three aspects. First, it provided a stable pool of potential cadres, which was imperative to the rapid development and long term maintenance of Communist administrations at different levels. Second, the participants, including educators and the educated, were gradually immersed in the Party's revolutionary education, thereby replacing traditional literati's belief in "orthodox" (*zhengtong*) Nationalist government with the discourse of change in the "Mandate of Heaven" (*tianming*).<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, the education system functioned as another effective channel of mass organization, for both children and adults. Hence, the CCP paid considerable attention to building its education programs from the beginning of the Soviet period.

Despite its profound significance in the building of the party-state, the topic of Communist education in base areas has received surprisingly less attention in historical scholarships. On the one hand, the sparse elementary and middle schools during Yan'an period can hardly appeal to scholars as an effective organizational impetus for Communist mobilization. Neither can education be regarded as a convincing socioeconomic condition to initiate peasant revolution. Only Keating briefly mentions the

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<sup>1</sup> "Mandate of Heaven" was advanced by Duke of Zhou to explain to people the reason for the overthrow of Shang Dynasty by Zhou. It then was reinforced by Confucian scholars to interpret the legitimacy of dynastical cycle in Chinese history. Although the last dynasty, Qing, ended in 1911, this concept was still influential among scholars as well as ordinary people during the Republican period.

literacy classes and newspaper-reading groups as a part of cultural reconstruction in Shan-Gan-Ning Border Region (Keating 1997, 233-234). On the other hand, scholars of Chinese educational development simply regard the wartime Communist education as a short transitional precedent that partly reflected the origin of “radicalism” in the education reform of twentieth century China (Pepper 2000, 118-154). However, my study of the Jiangsu experience reveals that the Communist education programs had a much more inclusive content than previous studies indicate. Aside from regular schooling systems, social education targeting local cadres and the masses comprised another imperative component. This chapter suggests that, with more available financial resources, the base areas of Jiangsu were able to maintain a large numbers of schools that actually served as a convenient channel for Communist mobilization.

#### **CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLING SYSTEM**

According to the Jiangxi Soviet provincial government report of 1932, there were 2,277 elementary schools and 82,342 enrolled students in the fourteen counties of Jiangxi controlled by the Party. These figures rose to 3,052 and more than 89,700 respectively in 1934. In Xinguo County, a model soviet county, approximately 12,800 of 20,969 children attended elementary schools and the enrollment percentage reached more than 60% of the school-aged group.<sup>2</sup> This figure was surprisingly high compared with the less than 9% enrollment figure in the Nationalist controlled counties of the same province, and 22% as

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<sup>2</sup> “Model soviet county” refers to a county that most, if not all, of the administrative polities and programs run the best and thus, was treated by the Party authority as a model for other counties to follow. Usually, such model counties enjoyed more favorable fiscal and political resources than others.

national average (Qu Xingui and Qiu Guangwei 1982, 38-39).<sup>3</sup> The Jiangxi Soviet accused the upper class, i.e. landlords and rich peasants, of monopolizing educational resources and insisted on eliminating the upper class, regarding it the prerequisite of launch education reform (Pepper 2000, 119-127). Such a radical policy might partly explain why the enrollment percentage of the school-aged group remained unchanged during the Party's short stay in Ruijin—it did not really have a chance to put these goals in that amount of time.

Upon arrival in Yan'an after the Long March in 1935, the Party continued its mass-line education policy to build new or restore existing elementary schools and encourage enrollment among school-aged children. The policy proved to be quite successful as the number of elementary school children grew ten-fold from 1935 to 1940. In the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, there were 120 elementary schools that accommodated 2,000 students in 1935. The numbers increased to 1,341 and 41,458 respectively by the spring of 1940 (Pepper 2000, 130-131). The average enrollment number per school almost doubled in the same period. Such a rapid development, however, initiated a shortage of elementary school teachers and a decreased teaching quality accordingly. The Central Education Committee thus decided to realign limited education resources and merged schools in the same districts. This policy directly resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of elementary schools, and a surprising

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<sup>3</sup> The Nationalist data was conducted in 1930. Suzanne Pepper states that the enrollment percentage of the same age-group was 7.2% in Nationalist controlled Jiangxi. Her data comes from *League of Nation Report* (Pepper 2000, 124).

I highly suspect the reliability of enrollment percentage of the school-age group in Soviet Jiangxi. However, there's no other data to verify or refute it. Data of Yan'an period only shows the overall attendance not the percentage.

decrease of the number of enrolled students in 1943 (130-131).<sup>4</sup> The new policy dictated that each elementary school held jurisdiction over children living in a 20 *li* radius, and students who lived farther than 5 *li* were required to board at school.<sup>5</sup> However, a considerable number of peasant parents did not intend on having their children, who they viewed as a critical part of the labor force, stay away from home for such a long time each week. As a consequence, the parents decided to stop sending their children to school. When the Central Education Committee realized that their attempts to improve educational quality had failed and had actually compromised the enrollment numbers, the mass-line policy returned to its initial vision.

Apart from the slight vacillation in elementary school policies, Yan'an's stance of education was consistently pragmatic throughout the War of Resistance. The Party at first conceived education of two categories: in-school education, which generally was designed after the Soviet Union's model, and social education that targeted the vast majority of adults. It prescribed the length of elementary and middle schools: four years for junior elementary school and two years for senior elementary school, two years for junior middle school, two years for high school.<sup>6</sup> On the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee in September, 1938, Mao and his followers decided:

First, the education system should be revised. Curriculums that are not urgently required should be abolished. School management should be reformed. Courses

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<sup>4</sup> The numbers of elementary school and enrolled students were 752 and 26,826 respectively in Spring 1943.

<sup>5</sup> 1 *li*=0.5 km.

<sup>6</sup> Most elementary schools then were either junior (*chuxiao*) or senior (*gaoxiao*) elementary schools. One with both parts was called complete elementary school. In Jiangsu Province, some junior elementary schools only required three years for graduation.

directly related to the War are mandatory at school and keeping students' motivations for study should be regarded as a primary principle. Second, cadre schools and training classes should be widely established and expanded to provide personnel resource for the anti-Japanese cause. Third, mass education should be widely developed. Mass movements, including after-school classes, literacy-learning class, skits, singing and sports, should be actively initiated and organized. Various local newspapers are encouraged and help to improve literacy level and national enlightenment. Fourth, free elementary education is promoted to enhance integrity among the new generation (Qu Xingui and Guangwei Qiu 1982, 53-54).

The Party especially emphasized the importance of relying on the masses' self-initiatives for self-education. Mao fully recognized that the Party could not develop a comprehensive educational institution with its limited administrative and financial resources. Therefore, the government should play a role of mentor other than a patron (Qu Xingui and Guangwei Qiu 1982, 53-54). After the educated policies shifted back to mass line in late 1943, the party enthusiastically promoted a model of "run by people and assisted by officials" (*minban guanzhu*).

Paralleling the impending closure of the War of Resistance and the Party's growing contention with the GMD, the demand for qualified cadres grew. The conventional schooling modeled after the Soviet Union could no longer meet the needs of the expanding Communist cadre echelon. A tendency towards deemphasizing the importance of conventional in-school education began to emerge in the Party's documents in 1944. It was echoed by Mao's idea that cadre education was superior to mass education, just as adult education was prior to child education. Education therefore was redefined as cadre education and mass education in accordance with these new guidelines. In addition to cadre schools, curriculums of middle schools and senior

elementary schools were modified to accommodate an expanding cadre education. They were aimed at training plenty of high-ranking cadres for revolutionary warfare and junior cadres for local administration and production.

Compared with cadre disciplines, mass education was inclined to be more locally spontaneous. The Party widely encouraged winter schools, half-day schools, evening schools, weekend schools, itinerant schools, various short-term training classes and literacy groups for adults in order to overcome labor shortage and wide dispersement of the population in rural areas (Qu Xingui and Guangwei Qiu 1982, 60-61). Based on the model of “run by people and assisted by officials”, elementary school curriculum enjoyed an wide-range autonomy as long as Confucian and Japanese appeasement ideas were completely excluded. School teachers varied from government-sent cadres to local intellectuals. Enrollment age was no longer restricted to 8-14 years old and the lowest requirement of graduation was adjusted to basic needs of reading, writing and arithmetic. The Party’s official newspaper, Liberation Daily (*Jiefang Ribao*), provided further explanation of this redefinition in its editorials:

Mass and cadre educations have different tasks at different stages. People should have advanced knowledges of math, physics and chemistry in the future. However, it is more urgent that they master the basic skills to participate in guerrilla warfare and efficiently organize production. Cadres therefore should be capable of offering corresponding guidances...[hence], any courses targeting higher-level entrance exam should be partly or solely replaced by those of tangible military training and [agricultural] production...the core of curriculums should firmly reside in the imperative knowledge of domestic household and rural life.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Genjudi putong jiaoyu de gaige” (Regular education reform in base areas), *Jiefang ribao*, 7 April 1944; “Lun putong jiaoyu zhong de xuezhi yu kecheng” (A discussion on curriculums and institutions of regular education), *Jiefang ribao*, 27 May 1944.

The base areas in Jiangsu tried to follow the Yan'an's education policies as best it could. However, policy-implementation usually had a time-lapse due to its distance from Yan'an as well as specific local situations. As a result, the "quality over quantity" policy did not really have a chance to be implemented before the local government was informed of a shift back. And thus, the number of schools kept increasing throughout the war period. The Suzhong Regional Base claimed that the number of elementary schools grew three fold compared with the prewar statistic data and the enrollment percentage was around 22% by 1942.<sup>8</sup> Table 4 shows the number of elementary schools in the

Table 4: Numbers of Elementary schools in Suzhong Regional Base

	junior	complete	others	all
<b>prewar</b>	160	40	38	238
<b>1940</b>	23	7		30
<b>1941 spring</b>				109
<b>1941 fall</b>				358
<b>1942 summer</b>	532	67		725

Source: Liu Ruilong 1942, 315-136.

Suzhong Regional Base. If one takes 1940 when the base areas in Suzhong was established as a starting point, the number of local elementary schools actually increased by more than 2000%. Other regional bases were also very successful in establishing new elementary and middle schools. Table 5 and 6 illustrate the numbers of teachers, students, and schools in the Yanfu District in the Subei Regional Base.

<sup>8</sup> Due to the Japanese invasion in this area, the number of schools dropped dramatically during the first several years of the War.



Table 5: Numbers of Yanfu District Elementary Education (private school excluded)

Year	School No.	Student No.	Teacher No.
1941	465	21364	83
1942	773	35265	128
1943	950	41077	1466
Till 1944.7	1186	67453	2064

1. Source: “Yanfu Qu Xuexiao Jiaoyu Fazhan Gaikuang” (An Outline of the Development of School Education in Yanfu District), *Yanfu bao*, 5 August 1944.

2. When the NFA arrived in Yanfu in 1940, there were more than 500 elementary schools. After the first mopping-up campaign shortly after the NFA’s arrival, the number dropped to around 200.

Table 6: Numbers of Yanfu District Middle School Education

Year	School No.	Student No.	Teacher No.
1940	14	>1200	>100
1941	3	>300	Dramatically decreased due to mopping-up campaigns
1942	9 (+2 after-school groups)	>1200	95
1943	8 (+2 after-school groups)	1453	115
1944	13 (+1 after-school group)	1878	207

Source: “Yanfu Qu Xuexiao Jiaoyu Fazhan Gaikuang” (An Outline of the Development of School Education in Yanfu District), *Yanfu bao*, 5 August 1944.

Due to its relatively well developed economy compared with other areas of China, the significance of education in Jiangsu was deeply entrenched in the minds of both the gentry class and ordinary people. Middle and elementary schools were quite prevalent and the literacy level was notably higher. Faced with frequent changes in authority, Jiangsu education professionals kept their distance from politics and insisted on “no discussion about politics,” “studying before saving the country,” and “studying *is* saving the country” (Chen Yi 1941a, 51). Such an apolitical atmosphere comprised no more of a hindrance to the Party’s education programs than a culturally backward Yan’an or other base areas in northern China. To counteract such embedded mindsets, the regional

government made specific emphasis on the renovation of private school (*sishu*) and incorporated political, military and production-related contents into basic in-school education. The Party painstakingly promoted “anti-Japanese cause” and regarded it as the core of its education program (Xu Chongxing 1988). In the rest of this chapter, I detail how the education programs was implemented in the regional bases in Jiangsu Province and how the Party explored them as a channel for organizational purposes.

### **THE EDUCATOR AND THE EDUCATED**

Before the NFA entered Jiangsu Province, various types of education facilities, including conventional *sishu* and modern western style schools, were already quite prevalent. To take the Yanfu District (with jurisdiction of nine counties) in the Subei Regional Base as an example, there were altogether approximately 1,900 *sishu* there. Lishui County in the Sunan Regional Base accommodated more than 200 *sishu*, half of which were located in the Party controlled area. Hence, the Party’s task in Jiangsu was more akin to remodeling a used house than designing a brand-new one, as in other bases. It is hard to tell which was more difficult.

Departing from studies of other base areas, I argue for a strong centralized inclination in the Party’s educational institutions in Jiangsu. Peter Seybott suggests a decentralized trend in implementing educational policies and programs in the Shan-Gan-Ning Border Region because teachers kept their autonomy in composing curriculums. He further asserts that social and elementary educations were even more flexible and more relevant to the communities they served (Seybott 1971). Seybott might be right if “decentralization” refers to an accommodation to specific local situations and

surroundings. However, my observation of base areas in Jiangsu shows that the Party regularly and closely oversaw its educational polities and programs. It also held firm control over its educators as well as the contents they taught.

In order to develop educational institutions that fostered Communist mobilization, the Party first reformed existing *sishu*. *Sishu* was a kind of conventional single-class schoolhouse, which taught Confucian texts, classic poetry, composing poetic couplets and practicing calligraphy. Ordinary textbooks included *Three Character Classic*, *the Book of Family Names*, *Thousand Character Article*, *Daughter's Classic* (for girls only), *Four Books and Five Classics* and other historical texts. Students usually began by recognizing characters and then recited the whole texts. *Shushi* (teachers of *sishu*, I will refer to them by “private school teachers” in the following text) were also responsible for explaining the texts. Besides conventional *sishu*, there was also a kind of renovated *sishu* that taught practical writings and mathematics in addition to Confucian texts (Zhu Ping 1984). Private school teachers usually were composed of old-fashion local intellectuals, middle school or elementary school graduates, sometimes even vagrants with literacy, and thus their teaching quality varied.

To convert *sishus* into modern style elementary schools, the Party began by establishing control over teachers. Local party authorities required private school teachers to register in their district governments. The government kept surveillance over them, demanding that they meet the Party's standards of a qualified teacher, which entailed advocating anti-Japanese democracy and the new democratic education policies, enthusiasm about the educational cause, and high level of literacy. Any actions that could

be read as an attack on the Communist authorities constituted the reason for suspending the offender's teaching certification. For instance, a private school teacher, Rui, instructed students write a composition using the idiom "gentlemen are outside the government while villains are in." Soon local officials accused Rui of using this homework to incite dissents. The county government eventually revoked his teaching certification (Yang Zhimin 1990).

Besides surveilling private school teachers, the Party also provided various training classes for them during winter or summer vacations through local Cultural and Education Section. Such classes usually lasted from two weeks to twenty days, and participants convened in a relatively safe place, such as a village ancestral hall, for special trainings. Such training typically included political education, which publicized the Party's educational policies, the ongoing warfare, and the significance of the United Front. It also demonstrated model teaching methods and displayed party-recommended textbooks. Local party cadres were the main force to teach in these classes and county or higher-ranking cadres usually made appearances for keynote speeches. The training classes were held at least every year at the cost of the local government. Local officials sometimes asked participants to prepare their own rations if the budget was tight or the Japanese attacks were frequently in the area. There was even an annual theme for the training classes in some places. For instance, in Tongshan County (northern Jiangsu) the theme was "to overcome the idea of employer-employee relationships and serve for the people's education cause" in 1942. The following year it was "to dispel the influence of feudal landlordism and serve the classes of workers and peasants." Finally, "to

incorporate production into course works and encourage students' industrious mindsets" became the theme in 1944 (Wang Ke 1985). Such training classes served as an important channel for the Party to integrate politics into ordinary education while simultaneously rejuvenating its teaching echelon. They also helped to contain the influences of both Japanese appeasements, which aimed at pacifying the masses, and "feudal residues" that strengthened loyalty toward the Nationalist government by presenting the GMD as the nation's legitimate leader, among teachers.

As the War came near the end, the training classes acted as more than a method of professional disciplines. They served as a forum that reinforced the Party's national leadership for both teachers and ordinary peasants. In May 1945, more than 130 elementary school teachers of Xinhua Sub-district (central Jiangsu) were assembled in Beiwei village for a training class. The major purpose of this training class was to clarify several basic points among rural intellectuals. The trainees were asked: first, who was the leader of the ongoing war, the "progressive" CCP or the "reactive" GMD? Second, was the democratic government led by the legitimate party—a question concerning the concept of "*zhengtong*" (orthodox)? The third question was how to run good elementary schools in the stance of anti-Japanese democracy. The participants were divided into ten groups for debate and discussion on each of the three issues. In addition, higher-ranking cadres came and gave speeches that indoctrinated the trainees with the Party's answers to these questions. In that sense, the so-called "group debate and discussion" virtually lost its spontaneity and autonomy, but served to help the trainees to internalize outside doctrines into their own beliefs. Meanwhile, the trainees were required to serve turns as

night guards to protect the safety of the class. The imminent image of the enemy—both the Japanese and the Nationalists—materialized a group of “us, the Communists” versus “the others” and further legitimized the Party’s leadership. At the end of the training days, a large party was organized and the trainees were encouraged to prepare entertainment, such as Beijing opera, low comedy, *yangge* dancing, etc., which were supposed to reflect their own digestions about the training class. Around 2,000 villagers shared this party with the trainees (Zhu Ping 1984). As a result, the idea that the Party intended to convey through the training class was no longer confined to the elementary school teachers, but spread to ordinary peasants as well. Professional training thus turned to a channel of organizational propaganda.

The Party’s emphasis on the professional training class actually revealed its expectations that teachers, especially elementary school teachers, would be able to shoulder a dual responsibility as both educators and mass workers (*minyun gongzuo zhe*), in charge of mobilizing the masses, due to a cadre shortage in Communist bases. The Party had good reason to hope so as peasants held high regard for intellectuals, including elementary school teachers, in rural area and were more likely to follow their instructions than those from outside mass workers. For instance, Xinhua sub-district government collected the Grain Tax in kind for the first time in September 1945. Although no precedential experience could be followed, the tax collection went smoothly, partially because the teachers in this area enthusiastically engaged in the propaganda ahead of time as well as in the actual collection process. The local peasants reflected that their

participation to some extent offset the peasants' misgivings on the new move of Grain Tax collection (Zhu Ping 1984).

The teachers' efficiency in promoting the smooth collection of the Grain Tax might explain the reason that "Provisional Chapter of the Elementary Schools in East Route" directly prescribed that elementary school teachers carry the responsibility of mass mobilization in addition to regular teaching.<sup>9</sup> Teachers were required to mobilize and organize their students to take an active part in various social activities, such as selling newspapers and singing on occasions of public gathering. They were supposed to take advantage of routine family visits to obtain detailed information of village compositions. In addition, they were organized through their own professional associations—Teacher Resistance Association (*Jiaojiu Hui*), under the supervision of the Party.

After gaining control of the teaching echelon, the Party's next step was to screen textbooks. The CCP technically allowed elementary and middle schools to choose their text books independently. Nevertheless, the registration system and frequent training programs mentioned above actually confined teachers' choices to the Party sanctioned books. According to the guidelines issued by the Party, schools usually set the subjects of Chinese, Maths, General Knowledge (Sometimes known as hygiene), Music, Drawing, and P.E.. Some senior or complete elementary schools set Current Affairs, History and

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<sup>9</sup> "Donglu jiaoyu weiyuanhui banxing donglu xiaoxue zanxing guicheng" (Provisional chapter of the elementary schools in the east route by the east route education committee), *Dongjin bao*, 10 February 1941.

Geography when possible. Table 7 below shows the weekly school schedule of an ordinary elementary school student.

Table 7: Elementary School Subjects and Weekly Teaching Time (minutes)

Subject/Time/Grade	Junior Grade	Middle Grade	Senior Grade
<b>Political Speech</b>	120	120	120
<b>Maths</b> <i>Calculation</i>	150	150	180
<i>Abacus</i>	*	60	60
<b>Chinese</b>	330	330	360
<b>General Knowledge</b>	150	150	180
<b>Military Training</b>	*	180	180
<b>Music</b>	180	90	90
<b>Drawing</b>	180	*	*
<b>Social activities</b>	*	180	180
<b>Sum</b>	1110	1260	1320

Source: “Donglu jiaoyu weiyuanhui banxing donglu xiaoxue zanxing guicheng” (Provisional chapter of the elementary schools in the east route by the east route education committee), *Dongjin bao*, 10 February 1941.

Although literacy and mathematics were the most imperative skills for ordinary peasant life, political education enjoyed priority over all other subjects. The content of all set-up subjects were infiltrated with the ideas of Resistance, anti-civil war, and overthrowing three mountains over the people.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the six-grade Chinese textbook of *Ruli* Complete Elementary School (central Jiangsu) included articles of “Pingxingguan Victory,” “After the establishment of the Second Front,” “Ordinary People in Charge,” which publicized the ideas of Resistance and democracy;<sup>11</sup> those of “the Breakout in Wannan,” “Selfish People’s thoughts,” “the Story of Cat and Mouse,” and “Taiwan

<sup>10</sup> “Three mountains” refers to feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism.

<sup>11</sup> When the CCP used “democracy”, it did not refer to such democratic institutions of the United States or European countries. At the time when the Nationalist government was still a legitimate authority, the Party used “democracy” as a discourse to justify its opposition against the GMD and its existence as a political entity.



People under Japanese colonialism” that attacked Jiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist government and Wang Jingwei’s collaborationist government; and those of “What the World Would be?” and “When the Sun Takes a Break” that taught scientific knowledge (Zhu Ping 1984). Besides regular textbooks, reports of local newspapers, such as the *Yanfu Dazhong* (Yanfu Public), the *Sunan Bao* (Sunan Newspaper), the *Dazhong Bao* (Public Newspaper), etc., were also used as teaching materials in senior level classes.

The Party regarded middle school education more as a method of cadre discipline and middle school graduates as a pool for future Communist cadres. Its purpose was to ensure students a Communist worldview. It emphasized a thorough understanding of the ongoing warfare, the development of the Chinese society and history, and the Communist-Nationalist clash within the framework of the Party’s doctrines. Therefore, *History of Society Development*, *Popular Philosophy*, and Mao’s works including “Theory of New Democracy”, “Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party”, “On the Protracted War”, and “Discussion about the Strategies of Opposing Japanese Imperialism” comprised the major content of middle school curriculums.

Moreover, anti-Japanese and pro-Party contents were prevalent in the teachings of other subjects. Math drilled incorporated anti-Japanese factors. Here is an example:

One day a puppet troop went out for mopping-up campaign. It contained X battalions (each battalion was composed of X companies and each company X soldiers). After a fierce counterattack by the NFA, X were killed and X were captured. In this case how many Japanese soldiers were sent out and how many of them finally retreated?

To avoid over-attachment to abstract knowledge, which might repel students and their families, the Party paid special attention to developing practical skills, such as abacus, practical writing, knitting and knowledge of animal-breeding into ordinary teachings. The class of Music taught various revolutionary songs—the “Song of NFA”, the “Song of the Eighth Route Army”, the “March of the Volunteers” (later the National anthem of the PRC), the “Yellow River Cantata”, “On the Songhua River” and other local resistance ballads. In the Xinhua Sub-district when school was over, students were lined up and sang these songs on their way home. Peasants nearby went out of their way to see this parade and sometimes they happily echoed the songs (Lv Peihe and Liu Jing 1984). It functioned as a daily ritual for both the students and their audience, which helped the students to internalize the ideas that these lyrics carried and spread the anti-Japanese and pro-Party messages in an amusing way.

The Party’s third step was to compete for the support of school principals. There were generally three categories of schools in the Jiangsu base areas. The first was established by local Communist government after the NFA’s arrival. The Party usually held full control over their personnel. The second category was the prewar Nationalist government sponsored public schools and private schools registered in the Nationalist Education Department, which consisted of the majority in Jiangsu. Some principals of these schools were pro-Party while others struggled to keep their distance from all political groups. This category was the major target for the Party’s mobilization and penetration. The last category was controlled by the local Nationalist diehards, who maintained consistent loyalty to the Nationalist government in Chongqing.

The Communist infiltration occurred at all levels of these schools. In Jiangba Town of northern Jiangsu the local elementary school was controlled by the gentry. The Party moved to convert the school when it entered the area. Consequently, the local regional government dispelled the former personnel and replaced them with outside cadres and newly recruited local activists. However, such a rearrangement was secretly resisted by the local gentry. They concealed teaching supplies and prevented new outside teachers from finding places to live in town. This situation lasted for more than two weeks until the government and the local gentry agreed on a compromise, in which the school rehired some of the former teachers (Lv Peihe and Liu Jing 1984). In this case, the local gentry and the Party reached a truce, through which a new local power structure developed.

Bottom-up channel provided another way of establishing control. First the Party sent young activists to the targeted schools or selected several leftist students already in attendance. These infiltrators would then mobilize their fellow students through fraternity, sisterhood, or various after-school associations. They composed leaflets and big-character posters to attack the current leaders of the schools. Most frequently they made accusations of treason and corruption. Meanwhile they also publicized the Party's image as the pillar of the anti-Japanese cause. When the mass mobilization was well-prepared, those activists organized a school-wide protest to force the principal to step down. This action was backed by military force dispatched by the local Communist government. In a typical case, the principal of Taixing County Middle School, Jianhua Zhu, was dismissed during the students' calls of "Step down Zhu Jianhua!" "Step down

the Japanese Imperialism!” “Step down the traitor!” and “Let the Anti-Japanese democratic government take over our school!” The chief of the county Cultural and Education Section, Ju Qi, took over the entire school as the representative of the local democratic government that day. Soon the County Middle School was relocated to the central area of the Subei Regional Base to facilitate the Party’s close surveillance (Li Xuemin 1988). This strategy was even more successful in winning over the leadership of existing middle schools. Given local literacy conditions, middle schools were a sparse human resource for which the Communists, the Nationalists and the Japanese and its collaborationist government had to compete. Therefore, it was hard for the local government to simply install its own personnel and dispel previous ones. Furthermore, the Party’s firm anti-Japanese stance had won the educated youth’s favor and facilitated in-school bottom-up mobilization, at least in the Communist spheres of influence.

The Party also deployed various methods to exert influence on students. For those children who attended schools, the regular curriculums were only one part of their duties as students. The other was social activities, which sometimes extended into their after-school lives. These activities served as an efficient method for the Party to organize and control its people from school age onward. The “little teacher” (*xiao xiansheng*) program was widely adopted to spread ideas taught in school to local families. It called for elementary school students to be little teachers who conveyed what they learned in school to their parents. It not only helped the students memorize and digest new knowledge, but, more importantly, spread the Party-endorsed ideas to the basic cell of the society—family. A mother once told a local cadre in a half-proud-half-complaining tone, “My

child stuck to me every night in order to teach me recognizing characters. He will not go to bed until I memorized the words (Jiang Peizhi 1983).” Moreover, little teachers went beyond families and consisted of an important teaching force for adult learning classes. For instance, they served as teaching assistants in female literacy classes (*Funv Shiziban*). Adult teachers were responsible for cultural classes, and little teachers for teaching words and revolutionary songs. These songs were usually based on popular folklores. They had only four or five sentences long, and therefore were easy to memorize. Here is an example: “the Japs were running ahead, I was chasing behind, let the bullet fly, and make sure he fall (Tang Minglun 1985).” Here the Party utilized teachers’ authority on students and extended it to families via kinship ties. It is difficult to evaluate how effective such an infiltration was. Their parents might simply disregard their words as meaningless childish talk. However, the little teacher program was an illustrative example to show how the indirect Communist penetration occurred on the basis of existing social relations.

If one regarded the little teacher program as an extension of school education, Children’s Corps (*Er’tongtuan*) functioned as an organizational method that continued the Communist discipline on the school-age children when they were not attending school. The Children’s Corps were usually organized on the basis of one school or a certain administrative unit. Its general leadership was composed of one chief, one deputy chief, one organizational member and one propaganda member. It had a branch in every village and each branch copied the structure of the general leadership. Under the branch there were several units with one leader and one deputy, who were usually third-grade or older. The leaders were publically elected among the corps members. The members of

each unit were not confined to students. It included all school-age children. Most corps had their own charters which prescribed their aspirations and behaviors. Here is an instance:

1. The great goal is to fight against Japan and to save the country. The responsibilities of the Children's Corps are to offer volunteer safeguards for each village. Once messages or traces of enemy are detected, members should immediately report to the village or town government.
2. Members should get along well, unify together and be cautious of traitors and enemies. Keep balanced between study and attending agricultural production. Everyone should try to be a little hero.
3. Members should behave themselves, be brave, and should not easily get set up. No true words should be told in front of the enemy.
4. Never be late for assembly or drop out when on duty (Yang Zemin 1987).

Besides these abstract articles, the Children's corps also had concrete daily activities. The elected branch or unit leaders were responsible for the team's good manners and its security on the way home every day. The two leaders were also the organizers of the village corps after-school activities and coordinated between the school and the village administration. The members were required to attend group activities each day after dinner, which included teaching and singing anti-Japanese songs, playing military games—such as manoeuvres of air defense and catching secret agents, guards, message delivery and withdrawal with all the belongings to nearby villages—telling revolutionary stories, learning characters, soliciting contributions, helping military families, mutual aid, small-scale meetings of village, etc.. The corps activities usually lasted for one or two hours. Each month or at times when there were large-scale activities, nearby branches joined together for big entertaining parties, which invited the members of the general leading group of the corps or local cadres to give speeches and

had programs prepared by the members. Some corps even had a regular meeting system that convene branch cadre meetings on particular dates, checking current tasks and arranging new ones (Yang Zemin 1987). Promising corps cadres were sent to special training classes for further education. A typical training day started with an anti-Japanese class teaching revolutionary theories in the morning. Propaganda skills, such as singing, dancing and drama playing, were taught in the afternoon. In the evening students were required to report their own thoughts, do self or mutual criticisms, or learn military knowledge through guerrilla games (Dong Dao and Liu Zeguang 1986).

The corps activities, however, were not always welcome. The Nantong Children's Corps began their activities once the NFA won Shigan (central Jiangsu) from the collaborationist troops. They sang on the street in hoping to attract local children and youngsters but failed. The leaders assumed that people were worried about the Japanese' revenge and thus kept their children at home. Guided by this assumption, the members stayed with families that had children for further persuasion. One member, Ji Chenghao, lived in the house of a shopkeeper whose son was about his age. Ji tried to explain the anti-Japanese cause to them several times, but both the shopkeeper and his son avoided the topic. His fellow members reported varying experiences in their attempts to persuade the people they stayed with, but generally speaking, the poorer the host family was, the more interest they showed in the anti-Japanese ideas. For these corps members, it was a vivid lesson of differentiating people by class (Ji Chenghao 1998).

Based on the description above, it can be argued that the corps was more than simply a child's organization. It had rigid ranking system, behavior codes, member

responsibilities, and checking and reporting regulations. It provided its members with a concrete interpretation of anti-Japanese cause, which would have remained as a hollow concept if one had only tried to comprehend it relying on school education. More importantly, it was a miniature of the Party's organizational system. Thus, from a very early age these children got used to a culture that submerged participants' social as well as private lives, encouraged collective activities and infiltrated political messages in every possible ways. In this culture, individual's loyalty was primarily devoted to the organization to which one belonged, i.e. the Party, not family. In Zhuangtan of Sishu County (north Jiangsu), a father was dissatisfied with his son's frequent activities in the local Children's Corps and cursed him that "sooner or later you'll get caught by the Eighth Route Army to the front and die for nothing." Other corps members heard his words and forty to fifty of them went to his house to argue with him. Even his son agreed that his father absolutely should be punished if he did not realize his fault.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the son sided with the Party rather than his father. The family bond was broken by organizational loyalty. Filial piety, the fundamental principle of the traditional Chinese society, was pushed aside in these children's mindset.

Most elementary school graduates returned to their families who eagerly awaited their help in farming. Some of them became village cadres. Only a lucky few were able to further their studies. Middle school education was financially unaffordable for most rural families and went far beyond family's expectations of their children as well. It actually

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<sup>12</sup> "Huoyue zai Sishu Siqu de Er'tongtuan" (the Children corps that was active in the Fourth District of Sishu), *Renmin bao*, 11 September 1944.



became de facto elitist education especially after the Party began to view middle schools as a pool of future Communist cadres near the end of the War. Therefore, the social activities of middle school students worked more like an internship for their future careers. They were encouraged to participate in propaganda teams singing, dancing and playing skits to publicize anti-Japanese discourse and the Party's ideology. They also joined mass workers for rent and interest reduction and Grain Tax collection.<sup>13</sup>

With a series of reforms on school education, the Party had successfully convinced the educator and the educated to establish a close bond between education and political affairs. This success facilitated the Party to build a politicized atmosphere that was new in Jiangsu, as well as other places in China.

#### **ADULT EDUCATION**

Besides the regular school education described above, adult education composed the other imperative part of the Party's education program. Actually, it was prioritized over school education when the War was coming to an end and cadre shortages became a significant obstacle in the Party's post-War agenda. Adult education was generally categorized into mass and cadre parts with the latter enjoying priority over the former.

Cadre training classes mainly focused on two points: political indoctrination and practical skills in mass mobilization. The length varied from a couple of weeks to three months depending on the trainees' ranking and the specific circumstances of warfare. The average term lasted for a month. The Party avoided public discussions of any sensitive issues, such as class struggle and land reform that labeled it "communist" and potentially

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<sup>13</sup> I will discuss these issues in details in other chapters.

repelled pro-Party landlords and national bourgeoisie during the War. It nonetheless aimed at building a Marxist worldview among its cadres through training classes, and therefore attempted to maintain its internal ideological uniformity. The first lesson that the trainees studied was “history of social development,” which taught the Marxist model of linear social development. It asserted that human society experienced the phases of primitive society, feudal society, capital society, socialist society and would eventually reach communist society. It assured students of the superiority of communism over capitalism and the latter’s doomed fate. Second, the trainees were required to study the history of modern China, which dated from the First Opium War (1840-1842) to the current War of Resistance. The Party blamed the misery of China on imperialism, the Qing government, and more importantly, the impotent and seriously corrupted Nationalist government led by Chiang, who, according to the Party’s view, was responsible for the current semi-colonial status of China. The CCP then promoted itself as the country’s savior, the only force which was capable of regaining China’s independence.

Meanwhile, the training content also dealt with issues concerning current situations. The classes introduced Mao’s theory of the protracted warfare, which ensured students of an ultimate victory over Japan. In addition to political indoctrination, the trainers helped to outline the characteristics of local communities with which the trainees routinely worked. Besides regular studies, military training was also mandatory. The trainees practiced running, rifle shooting, and grenade throwing on a daily basis and took their turn at secure duty each night. Sometimes night march was also a requirement (Zeng Zijian 1984; Zhang Chengzong 1981). One trainee, Hongyun, claimed, “Although no big

progress was made, neither can I put all the one-month rich and brilliant content into my mind, I still feel much better than before...in terms of my mind, I am much firmer...as for daily works, even if [I] will meet difficulties beyond words... [I] am not afraid at all and come out with plenty of solutions, and persuade the backward masses with patience. [I] do not feel frustrated at all. It would not have been such without attending the training classes.”<sup>14</sup>

In terms of organizing mass education, “winter school” (*dongxue*) enjoyed the most popularity. Keating’s study shows that mass education in the Shan-Gan-Ning Border Region was arranged on the basis of “production organizations,” which was deliberately designed to stir competition between these organizations in order to accomplish production goals (Keating 1997, 233-234). Such a production-oriented policy might have resulted from the inclement ecological environment unfavorable to agriculture and the Nationalist economic blockade of the northwest Communist base areas. In the regional bases of Jiangsu where physical surroundings were much more friendly, the party authorities were therefore inclined to nurture a new political culture via mass education. The Party explicitly stated to its cadres that winter school was not only a kind of regular literacy class, but more importantly, a wide-scale mass movement that targeted political mobilization. It took advantage of winter season when agricultural production stopped and provided the people with mandatory—even if it was not directly prescribed—political education that intended to deepen ordinary people’s political

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<sup>14</sup> Hongyun, “Wo Canjia le Minxunban Hou” (After I attended the Mass Worker Training Class), *Dazhong bao*, 22 January 1941.

understanding, mobilize them to participate in anti-Japanese production, base area construction and counterattack preparation (Zhonggong Sunan qu xingzheng gongshu 1944; Yanfu qu 1943f). The targeted objective was the “basic masses” (*jiben qunzhong*), especially organized people, such as members of various local mass associations, and used them as a channel to attract unorganized people. Although the Party prohibited coercion in eliciting popular participation by local administrations, mass associations, local militaries, children’s corps, and schools usually obligated their members to attend. Under the coordination of regional governments, winter school committees were formed at different administrative levels to take charge of issues concerning the winter school campaign. This committee was composed of representatives of mass associations, military and administrative organs, and residency council (*canyihui*). The Party especially encouraged the participation of local gentry on the committee at the township level and above. This encouragement was regarded as a concrete implementation of the “three-thirds” policy. The committees of *bao* and township were composed of five to seven members, and those of county and district about seven to eleven members. The regional government provided nothing but the textbooks and relied on local communities for all other cost of the winter school program. The financial support usually came from the contributions of rich families and mass associations, or sometimes the participants themselves.

The Party paid special attention to training winter school teachers since it fully understood that their proficiency would be a key factor in determining the campaign’s success. Winter school teachers generally came from five categories: current elementary

and middle school teachers, middle school and senior elementary school students, mass workers, private school teachers and local educated youth. To assure that the messages the Party intended to spread would be accurately conveyed to participants, short-term trainings for winter school teachers, usually around five to seven days, were conducted on county basis before winter school began. The training program included a reconfirmation of the significance of winter school campaign, dissemination of news on current affairs and political subjects that was going to be taught later, and teaching skills that emphasized mass route, and adult psychology and education.

The spirit of winter school curriculum was pragmatism. The regional government issued uniform textbooks, which were aimed at publicizing knowledge regarding rural production and deepening the masses' understanding on the Party's policies, such as the "three-thirds" policy, rent and interest reduction, and grain tax. The texts were usually quite short and composed of only simple characters. However, they sometimes delivered complicated messages. Here is a lesson text entitled "people and cattle want peace," which called for military struggle against the Japanese and class education.

People are not cattle.  
People are not horses.  
Be a man not a cattle or a horse.  
[if people are] Being cattle and horses this year,  
Next year [they should] fight for peace (Zhang Zhengyu 1983, 102).

This text was written based on the fact that people's lives had been thoroughly destroyed by the Japanese mopping-up campaigns. "Cattle," the most important livestock in rural life, was used here as a symbol of peasants' interests. To obtain a peaceful life for both

cattle and people, the only way was to fight and defeat the Japanese. It further implied that peasants' miserable fates had resulted from the repression characteristic of imperialism and feudalism, which was doomed to be overthrown by united peasants. Thus, "this year" and "next year" actually indicated two different eras. Certainly, whether the students fully caught the underlying message or the winter school teachers were capable of accurately conveying it remained a mystery. There were also texts that summoned the nerve to fight Japan by retelling common knowledge. Here is an instance:

One bamboo stick was easy to bend.  
Three cotton yarns were hard to break off.  
Nowadays the Japs came to intrude [our homeland],  
[we have to] Unite like one heart for resistance (Xu Shanwen et al 1985, 89).

In addition, various local newspapers became textbooks of current affairs. Each week students had a review session to go over and discuss what they learned in the past week. Besides regular teaching methods, singing was also widely adopted as a way to fulfill teaching purpose and amuse the class at the same time. Here is a song entitled "it is really miserable to be illiterate" encouraging students to learn words:

Folks, it is really miserable to be illiterate;  
[you are] not able to read newspapers or documents;  
[you are] not able to write contracts;  
Folks, work hard to learn and read;  
do not waste any minute or second;  
be a hero of production and fighting [the Japanese] (Xu Shanwen et al 1985, 89).

A large-scale entertaining party was held every other week to boost students' morale. After all, most participants of the campaign had left school for quite a long time or had

never before attended a regular school day. Therefore, winter school not only meant education but also functioned as an organizational discipline for ordinary peasants, who focused merely on domestic issues and lacked collective awareness of acting by rules and authorities.

During the winter season there were usually two class periods with the spring festival a break in between. Each period lasted for at least thirty days and on each single day the winter school could have a whole-day, half-day or evening class, depending on local convenience. Normalized literacy class and community sponsored schools were strongly encouraged, especially in central areas where mass organizations such as peasant resistance association were active. Such classes or schools usually borrowed the facilities of local elementary schools, ancestral halls, temples or other public places for teaching purpose. Students were divided into different classes according to their age, sex, literacy level, and available time. Each class recommended one monitor who was in charge of keeping fellow students' attendance, maintaining order during class, and leading discussion. To emphasize its democratic characteristic and encourage wider attendance, normalized winter school stipulated rules of behavior and attendance times upon which all the students agreed. In front areas where the local party branches were not powerful enough to guarantee normalized winter school security, itinerant teaching groups and literacy classes were encouraged. In addition to normalized schools, public blackboards, newspaper-reading groups, speech forums and wall newspapers served as supplementary forms of the campaign. On marketing days, trained winter school teachers and mass workers chose the most crowded places in towns, such as tea houses, restaurants, and

public bathrooms, to give speeches on public affairs and anti-Japanese ideas. They also taught revolutionary songs to the masses on such occasions. Under the name of promoting mass education, the winter school served as a bridge for the Party to reach ordinary people's daily lives in the slack season.

The Party's initial expectations of winter school were simply to publicize its political agenda and increase the literacy level of ordinary people. To the Party's joy, it functioned far beyond merely a mass education program. The winter school spontaneously served as a public forum for peasants to make judgments and discuss issues related to their daily life in some places. For instance, issues such as how to divide reclaimed land, selling land for funeral expenses and in-law disputes were brought into the winter school classroom for final judgment. A local military soldier of Ruibei Town in Yancheng County was forced to make his public apology in the winter school when he abandoned his night patrol duties to play cards.<sup>15</sup> This new development was significant for the Party for two reasons. First, it changed peasants' conventional way of dealing with domestic issues, which had attempted to confine discussion and negotiation within the family or families with the same surname. Now family disgraces (*jiachou*) like in-law arguments could be brought in front of the whole village. In this sense, familial bonds were weakened and an official authority, i.e. the Party, became an alternative to solve family disagreements. It also showed the Party's successful infiltration into the private lives of the masses. Second, ordinary people gradually accepted the ritual of regular

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<sup>15</sup> "Zai dongxue chengren cuowu" (Admitting making mistakes in winter school), *Yanfu Dazhong*, 22 January 1945.



public gatherings under the Party's summons. This ritual might not be a fresh experience for the cadres of government or mass associations, which held meetings on a regular basis. However, it certainly was a fresh experience for ordinary peasants. Such a ritual made the participants feel close to fellow community members and self-identify with the group, and thus enhanced their awareness of collectivism. This, to some extent, further weakened the role that family played in local communities.

Certainly, disjunction between policy-makers' intentions and the actual implementation of winter schools did occur in places. The winter school in Guanyun County (north Jiangsu) was organized in a normalized form regardless of local conditions, which resulted in low participation and complaints.<sup>16</sup> The winter school teachers in Dongguanmu area began their lesson with theories of original communism, which drove their students away from the classroom and aroused dissonance from local gentry.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, these shortcomings did not shadow the Party's success in assimilating ordinary people into its pan-political culture.

## CONCLUSION

If one needs to concisely outline the Party's education program, there is no phrase more suitable than "education as mass mobilization" (*jiaoyu minyunhua*). This concept was firstly brought out on *Jiangnan*, a half-monthly magazine circulated in higher-ranking Communist cadres in the Sunan Regional Base. Although I did not find such

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<sup>16</sup> Jin Feng, "Guanyun dongxue zhong de jige wenti" (Several issues in the winter schools in Guanyun), *Renmin Bao*, 3 February 1945.

<sup>17</sup> Yang Ning, "Zenyang caineng ban hao dongxue" (How to run the winter school well), *Renmin Bao*, 3 February 1942.

expression in newspapers or official documents in other Jiangsu base areas, the characteristics of mass mobilization underlied almost every single educational policy and program. “Education as mass mobilization” fulfilled the Party’s urgent request of penetrating local society and creating a new culture that favored Communist leadership.

First, this concept clearly articulated that education was part of the Party’s comprehensive framework of the wartime Communist movement. “Education as mass mobilization” revealed the marriage of education and politics, intending to counteract the collaborationist government’s slogan of “studying equals to patriotism.” It also showed that the Party was open to the possibility of the upward social mobilization of ordinary masses, like a CCP cadre once stated during the Jiangxi period—“to break off the upper class’s monopoly of education resource.” Furthermore, it undermined the independent status that educators enjoyed in the traditional Chinese society and assimilated them to its political institution. Therefore, this marriage was not only between education and politics, but also between the Party and the educator. Meanwhile, the mass-mobilizational education also attracted students and social youth who were enthusiastic for anti-Japanese patriotism. Within the schools, students were organized into student unions; outside the schools, social youth were mobilized to join the Youth Resistance Associations under anti-Japanese discourse. Both were peripheral organizations of the Party. “Education as mass mobilization” demonstrated the Party’s determination of absorbing each possible individual, regardless of age, into its revolutionary cause.

Second, the mass-mobilizational education program was the result of the party’s pragmatism. Due to its practical need for penetrating local society, the most senior local

party members who joined the Party upon its first arrival were usually among the lowest class and without any education. After a couple of years, an embarrassing situation in which the chiefs of counties were not able to read or calculate, gained prevalence in base areas in Jiangsu. To improve the literacy level of local cadres, a kind of education suitable for mass work training had to be developed. In addition, the objective environment made the mass-mobilizational education imperative. After the Hundred-Regiment Battle in the 1940 revealed the growing military power of the Party, the Japanese army had shifted their major target from the Nationalist to the Communist base areas. Meanwhile Nationalist-Communist skirmishes occurred frequently, especially after the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941. Such an unstable environment required schools to move between different locales along with students if they wanted to survive Japanese military attacks. Sometimes students had to carry two sets of textbooks, one assigned by the Communist government for regular study and one by the collaborationist government to cope with sudden checks from the Japanese. Students in the areas subject to mopping-up campaigns did not have fixed places or time to attend school, or even indoor classrooms that provided shelter from inclement weather. Such loyal insistence might not be achieved merely by conventional education.

Most importantly, “education as mass mobilization”, like the Party’s various other strategies, was designed to build the legitimacy of the CCP as the national leading party vis-a-vis the GMD in the hearts of ordinary people. After ten years of tenure as a legitimate government, the GMD’s orthodox status was quite popular in the minds of different groups including intellectuals, peasants and landlords. Some people did not

regard Wang Jingwei, the head of the collaborationist government, as a traitor simply because he still carried his Nationalist member identity and believed that he would turn around when the Nationalist army initiated counterattacks.<sup>18</sup> Ordinary peasants secretly returned the rent that they should not have turned in according to the rent reduction policy since they lacked faiths in the Party's legitimacy and did not believe that the orthodox Nationalist government would be easily overthrown by the NFA. To eradicate people's faiths in the GMD's legitimacy, the Party endeavored to create a politicized culture as an intermedia that incorporated each aspect of people's life into the anti-Japanese agenda and further linked this agenda to the Party. Once people spontaneously identified with this culture, they identified themselves with the Party and recognized the Communist government as legitimate.

It was hard to objectively testify to the effectiveness of the Party's wartime education policy in Jiangsu Province solely based on official documents. But generally speaking, the Party maintained closer supervision over elementary schools and adult educating classes since most of them were established or sponsored by the Communist government. However, when it came to middle schools, especially those transferred from Japanese occupied regions, students' families held serious doubts upon the Party's ideology and discouraged their children's attendance. Most families which were able to afford middle school education belonged to at least the middle peasant class or above.

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<sup>18</sup> Xinru Zhang, "Ji Jiaoshi Zhengfeng Hui" (A record of the Rectification meeting of teachers), *Renmin bao*, 27 January 1945.

This brings our attention back to the issue of class division, which the Party deliberately evaded during wartime for the United Front.

## **Chapter Five      In the Name of Resistance: Taxation, Conscription, and Mass Mobilization in the Base Areas**

As previous chapters have shown, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) painstakingly penetrated local society through a variety of channels. It organized ordinary masses into resistance associations, making them into semi-official branches. It established residency councils at various administrative levels to appease the local gentry in the name of the United Front. It gradually disaggregated the landlord class through rent-interest reduction policy. Through the New Township renovation and general elections, it replaced traditional *bao-jia* system with its own personnel. Most importantly, it nurtured the future cadre echelon by devoting special attention to building and maintaining its own education system even during the most intensive pacification periods.

How did the masses react to such penetration? The vast majority of people, especially those below the middle peasant level, benefited from Communist policies such as rent reduction and the grain borrowing campaign.<sup>1</sup> The Communist movement, however, did not only bring peasants benefits. In most circumstances, sacrifices and the extraction of manpower and supplies followed these benefits. Why did the peasantry

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<sup>1</sup>, The Party classified rural population into landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, and wage workers according to people's properties and their relation to land. Here are some general definitions of each class: landlords were those whose living expenses relied entirely on rent from their lands and other financial investments and did not attend any agricultural production. Rich peasants were those who were engaged in agricultural production with their own lands and still hired people for help. Middle peasants were self-cultivators and occasionally hired short-term labors. Poor peasants owned little lands and needed to rent land in order to make livings. Hired hands did not possess any land, and were usually hired by landlords or rich peasants, or rented land from landlords.

decide to support or resist the Party's policies? Moreover, what kind of strategies did they adopt to achieve their goals?

Social scientists have presented various explanations to these questions. Moral economists suggest that peasants based their decisions on communal norms, values, moral codes, mutual commitments, and, especially, the ethics of subsistence (Scott 1976). Others insist that peasants' decisions were the result of rational choice. These scholars believe that peasants tried to maximize individual interests by weighing possible gains and losses (Popkin 1979).

My observation of the Jiangsu base areas demonstrates the "rationality" behind peasants' responses to Communist mobilization. However, in contrast to previous studies that understand the financial interests of the individual as the sole factor in "rational choice" calculations, I argue that it was also influenced by "local knowledge." Borrowing from Clifford Geertz, I see peasants' choices as driven by a combination of commonly held sense of moral values, rituals and popular culture (Geertz 1983). This chapter examines Grain Taxation, military recruitment and the anti-pacification campaign (*fan qingxiang yundong*), all of which asked people for supplies or sacrifices in the name of resistance, as three indexes to explore the degree to which the Party penetrated into the power structure of the local communities. By exploring these three movements, I demonstrate the degree to which people volunteered or were forced to make sacrifices in order to receive benefits under the Communist governance.

## GRAIN TAX COLLECTION: THE EMERGENCE OF A GROWING STATE POWER<sup>2</sup>

The ability to levy taxes is one of the most important indicators of state control. During the Republican period, agricultural taxes were generally collected based on land ownership, meaning that tenants were not subject to state taxation. Thus, in Jiangsu Province, where the developed market economy made tenancy and absentee landlordism prevalent, most peasants did not face official tax collectors directly. Rather, they paid the rent demanded by landlords or their agents. Historian, Kathryn Bernhardt, suggests that the tax rate in the Lower Yangtze Region was lower under the Nationalist regime than the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). She argues that the power vacuum left by absentee landlords was soon occupied by the Republic government. Hence, the state played a dual role between peasants and their landlords. On the one hand, it employed bursaries and created rent-dunning bureaus to collect rents from tenants. On the other hand, it served as a protector that regularized and stabilized rents at a relatively acceptable level (Bernhardt 1992). Bernhardt's analysis indicates that in the Republican period peasants no longer understood the state as a faraway idol that they worshipped in ancestral halls. Rather, they saw it as a *de facto* force intervening in people's daily life when the War broke out.

Liu Chang furthers Bernhardt's argument by claiming that the CCP continued its predecessor's role as a mediator between tenants and landlords. He argues that although the political and social environment of the region changed during the War, the economic structure was not altered accordingly. Since peasants in Jiangsu did not face the government's taxation directly, it was hard for the CCP to initiate revolution (Chang Liu

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<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I discuss the collection of *jiuguo gongliang* (literally translated as saving-country public grain, I use Grain Tax to refer to it) from the time when it involved most social groups in the bases.



2003). Liu is correct in contending that the CCP faced obstacles in agitating for revolution in the Lower Yangtze Region. He also sides with other scholars of China as well as the Party itself to treat Jiangsu Province as a peripheral to the Chinese Communist Revolution. However, an exploration of the Grain Tax in Jiangsu Province reveals that the Party was never able to employ tax as an issue through which they could attack the Nationalist government. Actually, there is no evidence suggesting that the tax rate of the CCP was lower than that of the Nationalist government before the War. In contrast to its predecessors, however, the Party collected Grain Tax directly from ordinary peasants. Relying on its pre-taxing mobilization, the Party utilized Grain Tax as a means to reinforce itself as the state power vis-à-vis the masses.<sup>3</sup>

Most Communist base areas began to collect Grain Tax between 1940 and 1941, when the New Fourth Army (NFA) strategically shifted its focus to the north side of the Yangtze River. In 1940, when Chen Yi triumphed over Han Deqin, the Nationalist Governor of Jiangsu, and a division of the Eighth Route Army joined his force, the NFA began to enjoy considerable strength and influence in this region.<sup>4</sup> However, shortly after

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<sup>3</sup> Here “pre-taxing mobilization” means the policies and movements, such as the Double Reduction policy and various mass associations that have introduced in previous chapters. They, for the first time, were implemented in the base areas slightly before the Party got ready to tax its people. Hence, I use “pre” to indicate this point. However, some of these policies and movements were stressed cyclically, and thus, their relation with Grain Tax collection was mutually interacted at the same time.

Usually the Party would not begin to collect tax before it fully controlled the areas. In front areas, it collected tax through those double-dealing town chiefs hired by the collaborationist government, who secretly included the Party’s tax in the amount required by the collaborationist government. I focus on the central areas and did not include the discussion of front areas in this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> This was also the time when the new headquarters of the NFA was established in Yancheng, Jiangsu Province.

the New Fourth Army Incident of January 1941, the NFA was disbanded.<sup>5</sup> Although it was impossible for the CCP to relinquish its forces in central China, the NFA stopped receiving financial support or ammunition from Chongqing. This forced the Party to seek other sources of revenue to cover its administrative and military expenses. More importantly, the incident resulted in the death of Xiang Ying. Xiang was not only the commissar of the NFA; he was also the loyal representative of Wang Ming.<sup>6</sup> Xiang's death prevented a further conflict among its highest ranks over the NFA's development. After the Incident, Chen Yi and Liu Shaoqi—Mao's closest partner during the Rectification campaign—became the army commander and the commissar. Thus, Yan'an's policies were executed in central China with less resistance and distortion of its original intention. It was also during this time that the NFA lost the characteristics it developed during the three-year guerrilla war (1934-1937) in southern China and began to be assimilated to the pattern of the Eighth Route Army (Benton 1999).

After the New Fourth Army Incident, the Communist movement relied on local tax revenue more than ever before. It was also the first time that the Party could concentrate on its development without considering the restraints set by the Nationalist government or the internal power struggle within the Party. *Fabi*, the official

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<sup>5</sup> A brief introduction of the New Fourth Army Incident is in the section of "Base Areas in Jiangsu Province" in Chapter One.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Ming was the major opponent that prevented Mao Zedong from achieving dominant control over the CCP before the Rectification Campaign. Wang used to study in Soviet Union and was prestigious as an orthodox Marxist and Soviet protégé in the Party. His contest with Mao was not only for the ultimate leadership of the Party, but more importantly, for the path that the Chinese Communist Revolution chose. Xiang Ying, a previous urban worker, allied with Wang from the beginning when Wang returned from the Soviet Union, while Chen Yi was a loyal supporter to Mao's policies. Wang's famous maxim during the War was "everything goes through the United Front," which indicated his soft stance towards the Nationalist government. Since the GMD confined the NFA movements to the south side of the Yangtze River, Xiang and Chen bifurcated on the issue of the development of the NFA.

Republican currency, had experienced serious inflation due to the ongoing war and Japan's intervention in the Chinese economy. Its purchasing power decreased dramatically (Table 1). To circumscribe this malignant inflation, the Party collected land taxes in kind, allowing peasants to pay with rice, wheat or corn.

Table 8: Price of Daily Necessities

Items	Before the War (1937)	After the War (1943)
<b>Wheat</b>	4.5-11.5 <i>yuan/dan</i> *	500 <i>yuan/dan</i>
<b>Foreign Cloth</b>	0.08 <i>yuan/chi</i> **	25 <i>yuan/chi</i>
<b>Pork</b>	0.21 <i>yuan/jin</i>	20 <i>yuan/jin</i>
<b>Salt</b>	0.05 <i>yuan/jin</i>	10 <i>yuan/jin</i>
<b>Oil</b>	0.2 <i>yuan/jin</i>	32 <i>yuan/jin</i>
<b>Match</b>	120 boxes/ <i>yuan</i>	4 <i>yuan/box</i>
<b>Soda</b>	0.05 <i>yuan/jin</i>	32 <i>yuan/jin</i>
<b>Hoe</b>	0.5 <i>yuan</i>	120 <i>yuan</i>

Source: Rao Shushi, *Anle Xiang Diaocha* (An Investigation of Anle Town), (1944.2.1):49-50; stack in the Archives of Jiangsu Province, File no. GZ 11-164.

\*1 *dan*=150 jin; 1 *jin*=0.5kg;

\*\*1 *chi*=1/3 meter;

In contrast to land taxes that were collected on land ownership, Grain Tax targeted everyone who engaged in agricultural cultivation. It comprised a critical source of the NFA's provisions and supplies for cadres above the town level. The Party claimed that the Grain Tax was collected to "guarantee the grain ration of the anti-Japanese forces and different levels of the resistance democratic government and maintain the tax burden at a reasonable level" (Huaihai qu 1943a).<sup>7</sup> The tax was collected twice a year in the summer and the fall. Each time, the regional government issued collection articles, which prescribed tax rate, collecting procedures, due dates, discount and waiving conditions,

<sup>7</sup> Such claims exist in all articles about Grain Tax collection. Here I only name one source.

etc.. Generally speaking, the tax rate was based on household output, except in the Huaihai district, where the rate was individually based. Families who owned less than three *mu*<sup>8</sup> of land were exempt from tax duties. For rented land, owners and tenants were both responsible for the Grain Tax. To reinforce the Party's image as the representative of the "basic masses," the Grain Tax gave tenants an extra ten percent discount on their portion. If a family both owned and rented land, the two portions were calculated separately. Although the government only took specific crops as tax payments, peasants in different areas cultivated different crops. In consequence, each region established a standard crop, wheat or rice in most cases, which they used to measure other crops. The average tax rate was about 3% of the output per *mu*. Together with the average land tax of about 2% of the output per *mu*, the tax burden of grain production was around 5% of the value of output in Jiangsu Province.

Considering the variety in weather conditions and land quality, the burden of the Grain Tax on local people varied. Although most regional governments considered 3 *mu* as a prerequisite for the Grain Tax, the rate differed significantly. In 1942, owners of first class land in Suzhong were required to turn in 10 *jin*<sup>9</sup> of wheat or 12 *jin* of rice for each *mu*, regardless of the amount of land they owned. In Yanfu, however, land owners whose families owned 3-10 *mu* only had to provide 5 *jin* of wheat per *mu*, regardless of land quality. This 5 *jin* figure was even lower than the amount turned in by people who held third class land in Suzhong, which required 6 *jin* of wheat or rice (Zhonggong suzhong qu

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<sup>8</sup> 1 *mu*=666.67 square meter.

<sup>9</sup> 1 *jin*=0.5 kg=1.1 lb.

dangwei 1942c; Yanfu qu 1942c). As Table 9 indicates, a family with less than 50 *mu* of land in Huaihai turned in significantly less than a similar sized family in Suzhong or

Table 9: Grain Tax Rate Comparison (1942)

	Suzhong	Yanfu	Huaihai
1 <sup>st</sup> class land /10 <i>mu</i> *	70 <i>jin</i> **	65 <i>jin</i>	20 <i>jin</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> class land /10 <i>mu</i>	55	65	12
3 <sup>rd</sup> class land /10 <i>mu</i>	40	65	8
1 <sup>st</sup> class land /20 <i>mu</i>	140	130	80
2 <sup>nd</sup> class land /20 <i>mu</i>	110	130	48
3 <sup>rd</sup> class land /20 <i>mu</i>	80	130	32
1 <sup>st</sup> class land /50 <i>mu</i>	350	350	300
2 <sup>nd</sup> class land /50 <i>mu</i>	275	350	180
3 <sup>rd</sup> class land /50 <i>mu</i>	200	350	120
1 <sup>st</sup> class land /100 <i>mu</i>	757.5	808	808
2 <sup>nd</sup> class land /100 <i>mu</i>	600	808	484.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> class land /100 <i>mu</i>	454.4	808	323.2

Source: Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei 1942c.

\* 1 *mu* = 666.67 Square meter;

\*\* 1 *jin* = 0.5 kg

Yanfu. In Huaihai, however, the tax burden of a family with 100 *mu* of first class land or more was no lighter than one in Yanfu. It was even heavier than that of their Suzhong counterparts. Also, the rate went up sharply from 50-100 *mu* in both Yanfu and Huaihai. These numbers reflected the fact that there was an extremely large population of poor peasants in Huaihai, and land was highly concentrated both there and in Yanfu. Finally, Yanfu did not classify land into various classes when collecting the Grain Tax. As a result, the Grain Tax made peasants without fertile lands experience far more hardship in Yanfu than their counterparts in Suzhong and Huaihai. Later, paralleling a more thorough cadastral investigation, the base areas of Jiangsu were gradually capable of differentiating land quality and collecting the Grain Tax in a progressive term. Although the exempt

level remained unchanged during the War, the tax burden of those who owned the smallest amounts of land actually increased. Those who owned large amounts of land, particularly landlords, also faced an incremental load. While those groups suffered, families who owned less land but generated higher outputs received the largest benefits from the Party's tax policy (Huaihai qu 1943a, 1944a). Fortunately for the Party, this group comprised the largest portion of the population.

### **THE PARTY'S STRATEGIES OF MOBILIZATION**

During tax season, the Party moved towards wide-scale mobilization by targeting every member of local communities. Widespread meetings were its first choice for this mobilization. The Party began by organizing meetings for local cadres and the gentry, who stood in as representatives of different social groups. During the meetings, the cadres in charge emphasized the importance of the Grain Tax. They explained that it was a critical source of provisions for the anti-Japanese military forces. They also argued that the Grain Tax provided a way to adjust grain prices, prevent manipulation by malevolent merchants and counteract malignant inflation. The Party further claimed that the tax did not put increased burden on people's finances since the government had already lowered or exempted for dozens of other taxes. High-ranking Communist cadres personally wrote to or visited the most prestigious members of the local gentry in order to reinforce these arguments. Meanwhile, the Party held special training classes to deepened trainees' understanding of the collection's political significance for the Communist movement.

Mass mobilization continued after the training classes. Village-wide gatherings and group meetings were held in central areas. These meetings celebrated the NFA's past

accomplishments, which helped to convince the masses that the NFA was the only power that could drive the Japanese out of China. They also promised that once the Japanese were defeated, people's hardship would come to an end. Certainly, military action was a supplementary method for those who refused the Party's request relying on their connection to the collaborationist government. For instance, the Party arrested the daughter of the collaborationist town chief of Benniu in the fall of 1943 for the very reason (Lu Yi 1985).

The Grain Tax collection was based on the Party's extensive knowledge of land ownership and classification in taxed areas. However, when the Party first began to collect Grain Tax in the base areas of Jiangsu, it had to rely on the inaccurate cadastral records from the prewar Nationalist government or assumed the peasants honestly reported the amount of the land they owned. Most base areas began cadastral surveys the next year when the NFA held substantial control over local communities. To take Anle Town as an example, a cadastral committee was formed for each *bao*. It consisted of the *bao* and *jia* heads, experienced peasants, local gentry, landlords and the leaders of peasants' and women's resistance associations. It contained seven to nine members according to the "three-thirds" principle. This committee was in charge of the survey, and the sub-district government sent two to four cadres to each *bao* to supervise the process. They began by inquiring of each family the amount, location and quality of the land they owned. Then, they went down to the plots to check the reliability of the provided information. After that, the result was publically posted for a second opinion. When all the revisions and negotiations were done, the district government issued a registration

card to the land owner. This document recorded the ownership, location, and classification of the piece of land. Finally, all cadastral records were stored in the township administration office (Rao Shushi 1944, 45-46). In those towns that were unable to afford the cost of manpower, people were encouraged to report their land ownership honestly. The reported information was also publicized for verification. Then, the cadres only had to verify the information of families who repeatedly tried to cheat the system in person.<sup>10</sup> The accomplishment of the cadastral surveys quickly became apparent. The amount of taxable land in Dongtai County and Rugao County (central Jiangsu) increased 500,000 *mu* and 60,000 *mu* respectively.<sup>11</sup> The Yanfu District discovered 2,000,000 *mu* of “new” land, around 20% of the previously registered land (Xue Bucan 1986).

The Communist cadastral investigation turned out to be more successful than the surveys that the Nationalist government launched before the War. Li Huaiyin’s case study on Huailu County suggests that the investigation’s uncovering of “black land” was far more satisfactory than the government expected during the 1930s. One of the key reasons for Nationalists’ failure was the government’s inability to control its local officials, *xiangzhang*, who, entrenched in the local community network, acted more as protectors of communal interests than state agents when enforcing the investigation (Li 2005, 247). Li’s explanation also insinuates the cause of the Party’s success—its ability to control its local cadres. Since these men achieved their current social status and political power

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<sup>10</sup> “Fei Qingxiang Diqu de Liangfu Gongzuo (1944)” (The grain and tax work in the non-pacification areas), in *Hua zhong kangri genjudi*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Dang’an Press, 1987), 482-489.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



through the Communist authorities, they were more eager to show their loyalty to the Party than protect the common interests of local communities.

During the process of collection, different levels of local government adjusted their procedures in accordance with specific conditions almost every year. In Anle, a township level Grain Tax committee was organized for general supervision. In each *bao* or village, a Grain Tax group (*gongliang xiaozu*), composed of the head of the village, the grain committee member, the leader of the peasant resistance association, an experienced peasant and a town-ranking cadre, was in charge of concrete duties, such as land classification and grain storage. When the Grain Tax was collected in Anle for the first time in the summer of 1940, the *bao* or *jia* heads interviewed each household about the amount they produced. Knowing that the Party did not have the power to challenge their claims, most households intentionally reported less than their actual harvest. After 1942, the Grain Tax Group began to check the figures that families reported. However, the Group soon became notorious among villagers, as the members went to each household at least two or three times, poked piled grain with a bamboo stick, and left a mess for the family to clean. In the fall of the same year, central Jiangsu experienced severe drought damage. However, the Grain Tax hardly decreased. Households whose outputs were above 60% of the prior year's production were still required to turn in the full amount of taxes. In 1943, to simplify the procedures of collection, the government attempted to set a uniform tax rate for all land. Ordinary peasants protested these measures intensely. One complained, "Ten fingers are different in lengths. People are different in heights. How can tax rates of land be uniform?" Finally, the Party considered peasants' opinions and

classified the land into four categories with corresponding different tax rates. In addition, The Party held several village-wide meetings to publicize the procedures of collection, discuss the tax ration of each household set by the Grain Tax Group and the household head, and call for advice from the masses about collection (Rao Shushi 1944, 47-48). This negotiation occurred in the tax season when surroundings were relatively peaceful, and the Party had established substantial control in Anle. The CCP, thereby, encouraged ordinary people to get involved in political affairs and had the confidence to contain unfavorable public opinions. Such encouragement was helpful in reinforcing the Party's democratic image in people's minds.

Local grain tax groups adopted various measures to persuade peasants to turn in the full amount of the Grain Tax on time. Besides regular propaganda, such as singing, dancing and street skits, they organized competitions to motivate peasants. Knowing that peasants were sensitive to "face" (*mianzi*), local grain tax groups in Suzhong Regional Base employed red and green flags/billboards, which were hung in the main streets of villages, to praise people who met their tax quota and scold the households that lagged behind. Meanwhile, they held little ceremonies of "flying a plane" or "being a turtle," in which participants carried winners up high, making them like flying in a plane, or distorted losers' body, forcing them to act like a turtle.<sup>12</sup> According to Chinese convention, being symbolized as a turtle was a disgrace and a serious way to lose face in front of people. Ordinary peasants, therefore, had plenty of motivation to follow the Party's deadline and prevent such embarrassment.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

In order to guarantee the ration set by higher authorities, local grain tax groups showed no lenience to the poor. In one Town of Jiangning County (south Jiangsu), a village-wide mass mobilization meeting was held once the collection began. During the meeting, the presiding officer inquired of each household whether they could turn in the full amount of the tax the following day. The peasants were divided into two groups making marks of “○” and “×” for yes or no. In this sense, a regular mobilization suddenly shifted to a struggle meeting against the households that were not able to turn in the full amount of the tax. This inevitably made the atmosphere intense. The presiding cadres interrogated the “no” group one-by-one, with the “yes” group auditing aside. The inquiries focused on two questions: “what kind of hardship do you have” and “what shall we do to solve the problems.” This process comprised something of a psychological torture for the audience: on the one hand, the “no” group members worried about public humiliation when it came to his or her turn; on the other hand, it set a vivid example for the auditing group if they were not able to keep their word the next day.

The cadres were experienced enough to know that for those households suffering the most difficulty, especially the ones that did not have enough food to feed themselves, suggestions such as “you can borrow from other families,” would not work, since no one was willing to lend grain to families that were not able to make their own daily ration. When poor families were pushed to their ends, they could say nothing but “I will figure this out tomorrow.” In such cases, the cadres demonstrated astonishing perseverance in their interrogation, asking: “What kind of solution will you come up with tomorrow?” “Who will you borrow from?” “How much are you going to borrow?” “Are you sure he

is willing to lend?” When the interrogated was silenced by the abundance of these questions, the cadres encouraged the “yes” group to voluntarily offer their assistance—another usage of the auditing group. At the end, some “yes” households stepped out, under pressure or not, to lend wheat to the over-burdened families, but they insisted a timely payback once their hardship was gone. There was no record that revealed how such liabilities ended. What was known was that, eventually, the cadres obtained the word of the “no” group—“I will turn in with the full amount tomorrow (Zhonggong sunan diyi zhuan shu caijing chu 1943).” Higher authorities praised this method, setting it as a positive example to follow within Jiangning County, or even the Sunan Regional Base. Moreover, the meeting minutes recorded only positive feedbacks from the participants. Their praise remained suspect, however, as they would have been hesitant to express any discontent after such psychological sufferings from public humiliation.

The above instances demonstrate that local cadres played a key role in ensuring the success of tax collection. They designed various rituals on the basis of communal norms about prestige and humiliation to exert public pressure on the taxed population. Their knowledge of local communities enabled them to best reallocate household resources to optimize the result of the Grain Tax collection without arousing too much unfavorable resistance from ordinary peasants. In this sense, the tax collection was not merely an economic mobilization, but more importantly, a complex negotiating process of the existing political, economic and cultural situations in local settings.

## RESPONSES AND REACTION AT LOCAL LEVEL

When the collection came to an end, the Grain Tax was stored on the basis of villages. The village heads recommended households to shoulder this responsibility. In addition to the prerequisites of honesty and loyalty, households that maintained the storage had to have residences that were big, dry, far away from major roads or rivers and free from leakages and mice problem. Usually the capacity of one of these storage units was about 500 to 1000 *jin*. After double-checking the weight and amount of the collected grain, the Grain Tax Committee issued an invoice that recorded both the Tax Group and the storage household. Local government conducted routine monthly check on the stored grain. Considering the huge responsibility of this task, most peasants evaded such assignments. One simply claimed, “Turning in the Grain Tax is our obligation, but storing it is not.”<sup>13</sup>

Although the Party officially claimed that the Grain Tax rate was 3%, peasants’ actual burden on land was far heavier. According to an economic report on the Yanfu District, the ratio of the Grain Tax load to the total output in Yanyu Town of the Yancheng Fifth Sub-district was 5.3% for hired hands, 9.3% for poor peasants, 10.4% for middle peasants, and 11.6% for rich peasants (including small landlords). In the Funing Sub-district, this ratio ranged from 7% to 30%.<sup>14</sup> In addition, people were obligated to perform corvee service (*chu fuzi*). In Anle, the Party required middle peasants, rich peasants and landlords to perform long-term corvee service, which lasted for 9-22 days

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Rao Shushi 1944, 47-48.

<sup>14</sup> “Yanfu Diqu Caizheng Jingji (1944.6)” (Financial and economic situation of Yanfu district), in *Hua zhong kangri genjudi*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Dang’an Press, 1987), 166-186. It is not indicated in the report that whether land tax was included or not.

each time, and poor peasants and hired hands had to serve as short-term corvees. In the first seven months of 1943, altogether there were short-term corvees of 606 people and long-term corvees of 79 people. These were said to be the lightest load till then (Rao Shushi 1944, 53-54).

The disparity between the rhetoric of the Party and the reality of peasants' experiences during Grain Tax collection brings to mind a number of questions. Most provocatively, how did people react towards such a rhetoric-reality difference? Generally, they peacefully accepted the existence of the Grain Tax and hid their complaints, expressing them only in private. Such situations were due, in part, to society's inertial compliance inherited from the traditional Chinese culture. As one peasant commented, "from ancient time it is a universal rule that officials live on people and people live on the land. If we had not turned in the Grain Tax, what would these officials have lived on?" (Rao Shushi 1944, 55) Although the Party claimed that they collected the Grain Tax in order to support resistance activities and cover administrative expenses, for ordinary peasants, it was no different than the taxes collected by the GMD or the collaborationist government. A saying began to circulate in Dongtai County: "The Third Brigade (the GMD forces) fight for tax; the Two-yellow (the collaborationist forces) rob for tax; and the NFA cheat for tax." (Dongtai xian caijing ju 1943)

Yearly tax load increases further bothered the people. They complained: "The Grain Tax increased every year, and no one knows how much would be added next year." They also bemoaned, "The NFA are shrewd; last year they created a progressive tax, this year voluntary contribution. Even if 5 *sheng* and a half (of grain) was not mandatory,

(one still needed to) turn in 3 *sheng*. There's no difference between 7 *li* and 8 *li* (Dongtai xian caijing ju 1943; Rao Shushi 1944, 55-57)."<sup>15</sup>

Despite these complaints, people's discontents only resulted in words, never actions. Apart from the embedded mindset that they were taxed anyway, as I point out above, the military presence of the NFA in the neighborhood was a decisive reason for such compliance. Although persistently portrayed as selfish, near-sighted, parochial and manipulated in internally circulated party documents, peasants, as individuals, were also capable of making rational decisions for their own lives and their families. After calculating possible gains and losses, they decided to follow the Party for the time being.

Complaints from ordinary peasants actually reflected discordance between the rhetoric propaganda of the higher authorities and the concrete situations of local communities. The effectiveness and organizational ability that the Party manifested in the process of the Grain Tax collection demonstrated its impressive accomplishments in penetrating local society in a very short period of time. However, it experienced a gradually loss of control corresponding to their descending influence over local cadres, especially at the *bao* level. Quite a number of village cadres in charge of collection duties were *bao* heads who served local communities long before the Party took control. Since their power bases did not reside solely in the Party's endorsement, the Party lacked efficient means to restrain their behaviors. Even cadres promoted by the Party did not necessarily maintain their integrity. Although the CCP prescribed that the poorest households and military dependents were entitled to lower tax rate or exemptions, such

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<sup>15</sup> 1 *sheng* = 7.5kg; 1 *li* = 0.5 km.

benefits usually went to the friends or relatives of town chiefs or *bao* heads in Dongtai County. Corruption related to the Grain Tax was not rare. In the summer of 1941, a town chief of the Fu'an Sub-district took 2,000 *dan* of Grain Tax for private use. The town chiefs of Fengying and Jiangying built new houses with the benefits they received from Grain Tax collection. Meanwhile, for lack of supervision on storage, the waste of Grain Tax was surprisingly high. Two thirds of the Grain Tax of Sanzha Sub-district, about 2,000 *dan*, was unsuitable to pick up for use. The average waste rate of the Grain Tax in Dongtai County was around 18% from 1941 to 1943. No wonder people sarcastically complained, "The NFA cannot eat up the Grain Tax at all!" (Dongtai xian caijing ju 1943) In addition, unfairness was recorded during cadastral surveys. Middle or poor peasants were beaten and tied up for public humiliation, and their properties were even confiscated, if they cheated in the survey. The cadres' attitude, conversely, was much more benevolent when rich households did the same thing (Dongtai xian caijing ju 1943). Such negative impressions of the Communist local cadres, to some extent, blurred the differences that the Party endeavored to construct between them and their Nationalist predecessors.

#### **LOCAL MILITIA RECRUITMENT: PAROCHIAL MOBILIZATION**

The Party initiated all of its wartime campaigns under the name of resistance, claiming that they were protecting the masses from Japanese brutalities. Among such initiatives, organizing local militias most affected people's daily lives. Local military forces were not a new creation of the Party, but rather, a long-lasting tradition prevalent in central China. Elizabeth Perry observes that since the mid-nineteenth century, the rich



organized protective militias to secure the public safety of their communities while the poor resorted to predatory actions, such as kidnapping, smuggling and banditry for survival in Huai-bei region (Perry 1980). The increasing strength of local militias paralleled the lessening control the imperial court held over local society. Such a trend in decentralization grew when the court had to rely on Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang and their locally recruited Xiang and Hui forces for suppressing the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s. Philip Kuhn argues that local militias continued into the Republican period and gradually evolved into a system of self government that supplemented the functions the Nationalist government was unable to fulfill below the county level (Kuhn 1980[1970]). However, they also served as a self-protective cushion that precluded state penetration. When the Nationalist forces collapsed after its central government retreated from Nanjing to Chongqing, various local militias in Jiangsu Province stepped up to protect their communities against harassment from banditry, deserting GMD soldiers and the Japanese. Another factor facilitating the development of local militias was the large amount of ammunitions left by the GMD forces during their retreat. This was the situation that the NFA faced in Jiangsu as it struggled to expand its forces during the War.

Here, I introduce the process through which the CCP established its local military forces. The first step adopted by the Party was to appeal to the existing local resistance militias and assimilate them into the NFA. Local militias in Jiangsu were under the control of three kinds of people: bandits, ex-Party members who relinquished their membership after the Nationalist purge of 1927, and ex-officials teamed with landlords.

The decisive factor to the Party's success typically relied on the attitude of the militia leaders. As previous chapters have shown, the CCP's image of genuine and firm resistance fighters had been widely publicized and had impressed the masses and intellectuals when the War broke out. Disappointed by the reckless retreat of the GMD troops, some militia leaders volunteered to hand over their leadership to the Party for better military training and the coordination of resistance activities. Ren Tianshi, the leader of the militia in Tangqiao (southern Jiangsu), was a good example of this motivation. Such instances were also found elsewhere outside Jiangsu Province. In his study on the peasant salt makers of Shandong Province, Ralph Thaxton shows that local people were inclined to ally with the Eighth Route Army when it was fighting their enemies—bandits, GMD and the Japanese forces, all of which the peasants viewed as atrocious and rapacious. This trend became much more apparent between 1939 and 1942 when the Japanese began to build their collaborationist forces from bandits and previous GMD forces (Thaxton 1997). However, not all militia leaders embraced the Party with wholehearted sincerity. Many kept their own agendas and feared to lose substantial control over their forces, which could lead to a disadvantageous position in their power bargain with the CCP and the GMD. For instance, the local militia leaders of Xiqiao (Southern Jiangsu), Mei Guangdi and Zhu Shousong, eluded Communist assimilation by repeatedly refusing cadres sent to their forces, despite the fact that Mei had been a Party member during the 1920s. Therefore, the Party ran a high risk of militias' defection to the GMD or the Japanese until it was able to replace the original leaders.

Besides converting existing militias, the Party made strenuous efforts to organize its own local military forces. According to the “Directions about the Military Arrangements of the Anti-Japanese Bases” (*Guanyu Kangri Genjudi Junshi Jianshe de Zhishi*), issued by the Central Military Committee on November 7, 1941, “the military organization of each base area should contain three parts: regular forces, local forces, and local militia (who were not exempt from quotidian agricultural production)” (Ouyang Huilin 1988). The NFA was no longer the unnoticeable 8,000 soldiers that converged in Nanchang in January of 1938. Instead, as Chen Yung-fa indicates, the NFA had become the main target of the Japanese military since Han Deqin’s military force was defeated and driven out of North Jiangsu in late 1940. Under this circumstance, the Central Committee emphasized strengthening and expanding local forces and the militia. The same direction prescribed that the ratio of regular to local forces in plain bases should be 1:1, and for the weakest base areas, such as Sunan, the difference between regular and local forces should not be over-addressed in order to localize all military forces (Ouyang Huilin 1988).

Technically, local militias (including people’s self-defense resistance teams) were voluntary military organizations of all people who were not exempt from agricultural production.<sup>16</sup> It protected local communities from banditry and the Japanese, maintained public security and helped local administration in various duties. For instance, the Articles of Changshu Self-defense Team stipulated that “all people between 18 to 45

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<sup>16</sup> At the time, the NFA, the backbone team (*gugan dui*) of local military forces, and cadres of county level and above did not attend regular agricultural production and, thus, were not the targeted participants of local militias.

years old, regardless of sex, party, belief and religion, have the right and obligation to attend the self-defense team except for those who fall into the following categories: collaborators and those suspected of collaboration, ones deprived of civil rights, the mentally disabled, and people without proper jobs.”<sup>17</sup> After 1944, the spectrum was expanded to 16-50 years old, except for the disabled. However, based on the internally circulated documents, it is evident that the Party treated militias as a class based military force. There was a default agreement among party cadres that the backbone of the militia should be poor peasants, middle peasants and hired laborers. Although they did not ban people who were born in landlord or rich peasant families from participation, such people were rarely promoted to leading positions. The Party instead looked to the upper class for financial contributions and ammunitions support.

The Party intentionally reinforced its leadership in local militias. Usually, leaders of the self-defense teams were also the administrative cadres of the same place. To assure the Party’s leading role in local militias and downplay the influence of local elites, Party members and activists from a variety of resistance associations were encouraged to participate. Thus, a local cadre sometimes held dual or triple identities as an administrative officer, resistance association organizer and militia leader. Such a phenomenon resulted from the scarcity of cadres during the wartime, and, at the same time, was an inevitable institutional production of the Party’s authoritarian policy. It required a high consciousness of the different duties belonging to the corresponding

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<sup>17</sup> “Diyi Xingzhengqu Renmin Kangri Ziweidui Zuzhi Zhanxing Tiaoli” (the Provisional Articles of the People’s Self-defense Resistance Team in the 1<sup>st</sup> Administrative District), *Dazhong bao*, 16 March 194.

positions, which, unfortunately, most local cadres lacked. Even if militia issues became a regular discussion each week at the town Party branch meeting, and each month at the district and county committee meeting, militia cadres and members frequently overstepped their power. They sometimes arrested people, took fines and confiscated private property without proper reasons, and, at times, they even executed prisoners under the accusation of collaboration (Huazhong ju 1943b). Such behaviors deeply stained the Party's good reputation of caring for people in local communities.

In most places in Jiangsu, local militias developed paralleling the mass campaigns. The Party employed ordinary people's deep affection for their hometowns as an important incentive to call for mass participation. Many times people volunteered to join local militia after some mass movement, such as "Rent Reduction," under the slogan "fighting the Japs and militarily protecting our hometown." Here the Party caught the most tangible request of the masses, who were more willing to invest in their own wellbeing, rather than that of their country. What the local militia guarded was the security of their regular production, the benefits brought from the "Rent Reduction" policy, and their hometown. Therefore, the local militias of Jiangsu expanded quickly after 1941. Below is the statistic data of Rugao(dong) County (central Jiangsu).

Table 10: Rugao(dong) County People's Military Forces during the War of Resistance

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
<b>Sum</b>	9,031	12,047	22,682	57,269	40,179
<b>Militia</b>	432	2,242	9,197	24,618	7,514
<b>Basic Backbone Team</b>	68	51	385	1,318	1,115
<b>Small Guerilla</b>	64	167	109	197	215
<b>Self-defense Team</b>	8,467	9,587	12,991	31,136	31,335

Source: *Rudong geming shiliao xuanji* no. 17 (1986): 40.

Despite the rapid development of local militias, ammunitions support did not increase accordingly. Although the GMD troops left quite a few rifles and machine guns when retreating to the hinterland, such supplies rarely fulfilled the requirement of the expanding militia. The militia's weapons usually came, voluntarily or under pressure, from local landlord families who used to have private militias. According to Table 4, the average person to rifle ratio was approximately 2:1 in small guerilla groups, 10:1 in basic backbone teams and almost 100:1 in the ordinary militia.<sup>18</sup> The complaints about the dearth of weapons were quite prevalent among the masses. Some pledged, "We will join the self-defense team if rifles are provided." Even local cadres suggested, "It would be much easier to mobilize people if the militia could use rifles also (Hong Xuezhi 1942)."

<sup>18</sup> Basic backbone teams were selected from ordinary militias, and small guerilla groups came from basic backbone teams. Small guerillas were usually counted as part of the Communist military forces and were exempted from agricultural production.

Table 11: Statistics of District Small Guerrilla Groups and Militia in Rugao(dong) County (1944.7)

District	Small Guerilla			Militia				
	Team	No. of Members	No. of Guns	Ordinary Militia	Basic Backbone Team	Sum No.	No. of Guns	No. of Grenades
Dingdong	3	80	40	2,500	400	2,900		300
Shuangbei	3	70	40	2,000	350	2,350	25	250
Benfeng	3	50	25	1,800	300	2,100	3	200
North Juema	3	68	34	2,000	350	2,350	20	200
Fengdong	3	52	36	1,883	217	2,100	11	236
Juedong	3	11	10	980	98	1,078	10	100
Sum	18	331	185	11,163	1715	12,878	69	1,286

Source: *Rudong geming shiliao xuanji* no. 17 (1986): 38.

Due to the lack of ammunition and provision supplies, local militias were hardly capable of fulfilling the military task of “protecting their hometowns” as publicized during recruitment. They served more in civil tasks—maintaining public security, collecting taxes, and delivering intelligence to the NFA. Therefore, most militias were actually afraid of directly encountering the Japanese or collaborationist forces. Apart from this, local militias were also a resource for enlistment. According to the Party’s military ladder—local militia→basic backbone team→local forces→regular forces—the NFA occasionally went to local militias to select promising members for promotion to local or regular forces (Table 12).

Table 12: The Militia Promotion of Rugao(dong) County during the War of Resistance

	Sum	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Sum	3,601	272	296	515	2,121	397
To Regular Force	1,821	99	130	205	1,314	73
To Local Force	910	75	92	209	399	135
To Small Guerilla	870	98	74	101	408	189

Source: *Rudong geming shiliao xuanji* no. 17 (1986): 40.

However, such promotions were not always welcome. In the worst cases, this double fear of confronting the enemy and promotion to regular forces led to defection. For example, in Taidong (central Jiangsu) the Self-defense Team of the Second Sub-district defected to the collaborationist forces carrying all their weapons in November 1941. Likewise, the small guerilla group of Libao and Qizhuang went out robbing during meeting times (Hong Xuezhi 1942). As we saw in tax collection, the Party revealed its inability to control its cadres or forces at the township level and below.

The existence of local militias functioned more for political purposes, i.e. mass militarization, than protection of local communities. It primarily facilitated the leadership transference of existing military forces from local elites to the Party. Then, it served as another channel to organize ordinary peasants. Like other mass organizations, it created an identity for the masses as militia members, which reinforced the participants' loyalty towards the Party, and bonded them with the Communist system. Certainly, it also provided human resources for the NFA. Ironically, the most publicized ideas of militia recruitment, family loyalty and community attachment, became some of the largest obstacles to conscription.

#### **CONSCRIPTION FOR REGULAR FORCES**

Chen Yung-fa is right to argue that the Party's military recruitment was far more "voluntary" than it claimed to be. It is true that conscription was a complicated process of persuasion, mobilization, compulsion, money and political bargains, or even, cheating. However, Chen must also recognize that the Party had successfully changed people's conventional wisdom of "good men never join the army." He demonstrates the effort that



the Party made to construct an image of the NFA as caring, loving, impartial and well-disciplined, particularly compared with the notoriously coercive and corruptive reputation of the GMD forces (Chen 1986, 383-390). Nevertheless, no matter how promising the military career could be or how sublime the NFA were, joining the army meant to run the risk of losing people's lives. The enlistees would be relocated soon after conscription. Simple parochial mobilization, which worked effectively in militia recruitment, was not helpful, and even deepened people's attachment to their hometowns, which would have led to the failure of conscription. Therefore, the Party had to put new stakes on table.

When the CCP and the GMD was still in the honeymoon period of the United Front, the latter deprived the Party of its right to conscript the population. Due to Xiang Ying's soft stance towards the Chongqing Nationalist government, the NFA's recruitment was confined to assimilating existing local military forces, such as the Jiangnan Volunteers (*Jiangkang*) and the People's Volunteers (*Minkang*). When Chen Yi became the de facto chief commander after the New Fourth Army Incident and the Party secured its powerbase in north Jiangsu, the NFA resorted to direct conscription as a main channel of military expansion. After 1941, conscription was organized once or twice a year and reached its summit in 1944, as indicated by the above tables. It usually occurred around the end of each year when the slack season came and peasants were temporarily released from land. Although actual conscription only lasted about twenty days, preparational mobilization frequently began one or two months earlier.

Appreciating the Party's attempts at conscription first requires an understanding of its operational process. The prelude to conscription was the reinforcement of the

“Assistance Program of Military Dependents” (*youkang*), typically beginning around the Mid-autumn Festival. This program was designed to solve the problem of labor shortages that resulted from family members’ joining the army. The scale of benefiting military personnel was confined to main forces, local forces and all other guerrillas that were exempted from regular production duty. This program was supposed to provide assistance to their dependents, including wives, children, parents, grandparents and siblings, who were underage or incapable of independent living, under the Party’s supervision. The content of the Assistance Program ranged from exemption or favored treatment in taxes, corvee, production loans, educational and medical services, to helping the military dependents in agricultural busy season and other times of production (Huaihai qu 1944d; Suzhong qu 1944c). During conventional holidays, such as the spring festival, the dependents were invited to official banquets and received gifts and toasts from local cadres. In order to demonstrate the reverence and benefits that military dependents enjoyed, and thereby encourage new enlistment, the Party usually took the occasion of the Mid-autumn Festival to reinstate the benefits of the Assistance Program.

Although it was intended to mitigate the hardships that enlistment brought to military families, the Assistance Program did not always materialize as planned. On the one hand, some military dependents took advantage of the Assistance Program to evade diligent work themselves, which aroused massive aversion in local communities. Dependents’ complaints about poor treatment and cheap gifts were often heard during holidays. On the other hand, villagers were not willing to help military dependents at the price of their own harvest during busy seasons. Even local cadres viewed it as a dreadful

obligation. Due to such pervasive negligence towards the Assistance Program among ordinary peasants as well as local cadres, some obligation, such as sending gifts, often fell on the shoulders of previous local elites, i.e. landlords and rich peasants. Thus, the dependents were not entirely clear about the exact role that the Party played in the Assistance Program.<sup>19</sup> Without mutual communication and understanding between the dependents and local cadres, the Program, more often than not, simply became a trade off between military service and tangible interests.

After the peak of the Assistance Program, the first round of mobilization focused on inner-party education for local cadres and party members. Not only were they the major target of annual recruitment, they also acted as intermediates, who actually faced the masses in hopes of further persuasion and mobilization. Before village branch meetings, town or sub-district leaders had carefully analyzed their subordinates' situation. They had already drawn conclusions regarding the potential draftees and those who would be able to enlist more. Party members were expected to be models in the campaign and, thus, to move and attract more ordinary enlistees. Although they realized that the peasantry was the most imperative power to the success of the Communist Revolution, the CCP leaders stereotyped peasants as ideologically backward and lacking in education. They believed that mobilization would not succeed without thorough "thought struggle"

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<sup>19</sup> "Shiyi qu de qunzhong youkang yundong" (The mass assistance program of the eleventh sub-district), *Huaihai bao*, 7 October 1944.

(*sixiang douzheng*). This effort mainly focused on the questions of “what if individual benefits conflict with the Party’s benefits,” and, “are they really conflicting?”<sup>20</sup>

Before the branch meeting of Yaozhuang Village (Sishu County, north Jiangsu), the higher authorities had already categorized party members in the village. Among the eighteen members, six were of better consciousness, five hung in the middle with average behaviors, and seven kept the membership but never spoke on meetings. Since sixteen of the eighteen party members were tenants under poor economic conditions, the higher authorities decided to elicit their initiatives via class inquiries: Why did you suffer in the past? How had the situation turned over now? And, finally, who brought such changes? All these questions were designed to demonstrate the importance of controlling military forces. In addition, in order to create a progressive atmosphere, the six good party members were arranged to make speeches on the meeting. However, the event did not go as smoothly as planned.

On the first meeting day, most participants were late. Four failed to appear as they were out drinking the night before. All the attendees appeared to be tired and reluctant to speak out. Once called upon, even those who managed to attend failed to respond to simple questions. When it came to the key questions, such as “Are we concerned with our troops?” “Would we be fine on earth without the NFA?” “How can we strengthen our military forces?” and “Should we control military forces,” only one branch committee

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<sup>20</sup> “Sishu xianwei guanyu jinnian canjun yundong diyi jieduan hou wutian de gongzuo zhishi” (The working directions of the Committee of Sishu County about the last five days of the first phase of the conscription of this year), *Huaihai bao*, 13 November 1944.

member and two activists expressed their opinions. All the others remained silent, except for one elder whose speech strayed far off topic.

The second day did not go much better. It started with the issue of class hatred. Fearing the possibility that too many pre-arranged speeches would give the participants the impression that everything was set up and further downgraded their motives to attend, the presiding cadres arranged a free speech forum. However, the forum lacked proper guidance, and the backward party members dominated the forum. As a result, free speech eventually turned into collective complaints. The organizer decisively stopped the forum, and in the afternoon the branch committee members began to talk to the attendees individually to exchange opinions. During the evening meeting, despite the continued absence of two members, the participants had a heated discussion on past hardships. When the topic shifted to the potential threat of retaliation from the GMD and landlords, the organizers finally had a chance to communicate to the participants that the Party's military forces were not yet strong enough and lacked party member personnel. These words conveyed two messages to the audience. First, if the conscription task could not be accomplished successfully, their political status and current life would not be secure. Second, if they joined the army, their potential career was quite promising. The attendees apparently were motivated by the urgent threat and bright future. One insisted, "We party members should pick up the guns and join the army!" Under such circumstances, the organizers asked each attendee whether he could be drafted or not. Five volunteered and uttered their resolutions to mobilize more followers when conscription began. To

reinforce the enlistees' determination, the rest of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of how to help the enlistees' families when the men left.<sup>21</sup>

The above is an instance of a successful mobilization among the party members. However, not all party members could be persuaded by this pattern. In Huai'an County of the Subei Regional Base, local cadres demonstrated their stubbornness in the county meeting:

“I am not easy to persuade. I do not have anything to say.”

“Who wants to be an activist? I'd rather return all the Grain Tax that I ate than be named an activist.”

“I will not join the army even my party membership is dismissed.”

“If he goes, I will go, too. If he doesn't go, me neither” (Zou ping 1945c).

Some even pretended to go to the restroom, get sick or have a chronic illness when recruiting registration began. Their concerns can be outlined into the following categories:

1. Local cadres were not sure about the NFA's future. They were worried what if the NFA was beaten, and the Central Army returned?
2. The Life in the NFA was too tough; and some worried about no longer being a cadre once enlisted.
3. Some were afraid of fighting and getting killed. They worried that once one was recruited he would never be able to get released from military service.
4. Some were bothered by their attachment to hometown: the responsibility of taking care of parents and children, the virtue of their wives and not being able to come back when their families experienced difficulties. They were not sure of the effectiveness of the Assistance Program (*youkang*)
5. Some did not want to give up their cadre status and overestimated their importance in local works.

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<sup>21</sup> Zhongjin, “Sishu sanqu yaozhuang zhibu canjun dongyun zhong datong dangyuan xixiang de jingyan” (The experiences of yaozhuang branch of the Third Sub-district of Sishu about how to persuade the party member during the conscription), *Huaihai bao*, 13 November 1944.

6. Some complained that “I had been working so hard, and, eventually, I was enlisted” (Zou Ping 1945c).

Usually, the attitude and ability of local cadres determined whether the recruitment task could be accomplished.

After the inner-party education was finished, wider-scale mass mobilization began. Although it targeted everyone, the recruiters had already selected some key candidates during inner-party education. These candidates included those who had many brothers or no wife, those who were not household heads, those who were poor and had no one to depend on, those who believed in the Party’s Military Dependent Assistance Program and those who were brave and looking forward to a military career. A Huaibei Regional Base recruitment manual recorded the specific strategies adopted towards different groups during mass mobilization. For instance, when faced with women, recruiters primarily focused on inciting compassion for the NFA. Gradually the topic shifted to sending their sons or husbands to join the army. For younger people, recruiters focused their attention on describing the bright future a military career would bring. They stressed oppression from the capitalists to previous workers who had labored in big cities, such as Shanghai, and returned to their hometown to escape warfare. They then forged smooth connections between this oppression and an explanation of how joining the army could help to overthrow such tyranny. When recruiters came to a village that had more collaborationist dependents, a heated discussion about who would lead China was introduced beforehand, which served to reinforce images of the glory and bright future of the NFA (Liu Ruilong 1944).

According to many local reports on conscription, public meetings were usually the most effective method of recruitment mobilization in that they created a collective motivation, which was easily provoked by an emotional rush and manipulated by skillful inducement. More importantly, such public gatherings reinforced surveillance among individuals, which helped to retain the emotional result, i.e. being enlisted, even if a person did reconsider their choice to join the army after the meeting ended. In a provocative conscription gathering of Huai'an County, the models for the recruitment campaign individually narrated how they shifted their attitudes towards conscription. These personal stories deeply appealed to the audience and received continuous applauses. After the speeches, these models cried out slogans, such as, "Who else wants to join the army? Come on to the front!" "Come to the bright road!" "Good men, come on!" The masses echoed their slogans in the auditorium, and the arranged representatives then went to the front of the stage to read a congratulations letter to the enlistees. A peasant, Yang, who had been sarcastic towards mass workers, became excited by the speeches during the gathering. Another peasant, Lu, demonstrated his resolution by claiming "good men's ambitions reside in the outside world." An elder peasant, Ji, described in tears his experiences of being oppressed in the past and the happy life that the CCP brought. These emotional slogans pushed the gathering to another climax. Two petty intellectuals, Yang and Zhu, eventually decided to join the army on-site as a result (Zou Ping 1945c).

Consciousness meetings (*Liangxin Jiantao*) were another widely adopted form of public meeting. During the meeting, the participants were encouraged to tell, honest to



their own consciousness, the benefits that the Party brought to their lives and envision the bright future of aligning with the Party. Then, the recruiter paused to let the participants decide what to do next. This type of mobilization was most suitable for the base areas where various policies were widely implemented and the Party authorities had achieved substantial control over local society. When consciousness meetings began to take effect and the masses gradually came to terms with the necessity of conscription, the Party also summoned “thought struggle meetings” to criticize backward ideas among the masses.

Although popular support laid the foundation for conscription, skillful manipulation of these public meetings was also decisive in their success. Activists were arranged to make speeches, echo slogans, assist the recruiters in intriguing the masses, and break silence when the mobilization came to an impasse. However, activists and party members were advised not to behave overtly, which might lead to an oppositional stance from the masses and added obstacles to the recruitment campaign. The border between an active model of recruitment, who encouraged his fellows to join the army, and an over-active recruiter, who, on the contrary, distanced potential enlistees, was a tricky line to walk. The transition from mass mobilization to mass oppression also presented a difficult task.

The Central China Bureau assigned each regional base a quota in accordance with its population. How well the conscription quota was filled became an important criterion deciding the future promotion of the local administrative cadres within the Party. Therefore, fellow villages and towns often created an atmosphere of indirect competition regarding the numbers of enlistees, especially when local newspapers provided updates

on the number of conscripts in each village every two or three days. In the recruitment at the end of 1943, Shiyan Town (Sishu County, north Jiangsu) was assigned a quota of seven to eight enlistees by the sub-district authority. When this task was conveyed to the local party branch, the town chief suggested that this number was too small, especially considering the success that the Rent and Interest Reduction Campaign had just achieved. The branch committee then agreed on twenty. When they attended the sub-district activist meeting, the town cadres challenged their colleagues on the quota and pledged to enlist thirty persons. The sub-district committee, therefore, took this opportunity to mobilize other towns: If Shiyan Town could accomplish a task of conscripting thirty people, why could other towns not achieve more? This verbal competition was eventually settled when Shiyan increased their target to fifty people, which was more than six times the original quota. After arduous mobilization, Shiyan Town recruited more than one hundred youngsters, ninety of whom passed the physical exam and officially joined the army—eleven to thirteen times the original assignment. This story was recorded as a glorious success by a local cadre, Nie, in his memoir (Nie Dapeng 1983). Table 13 shows the quota assigned by higher authorities and the actual recruits in the conscription in Sishu County in 1943. From this, it becomes evident that the latter was almost as many as twice of the former.

Table 13: The Actual Enlisted Number in Sishu County (1943.12)

Sub-district	Quota	Actual
7 <sup>th</sup> Sub-district	70	128
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sub-district	95	162
4 <sup>th</sup> Sub-district	90	229
Sanzhuang	90	168
Chuancheng	65	81
Liren	40	128
General Section Subordinate Team	*	13
County Government Subordinate Team	*	11
Shizi	30	25
Baji	50	65
SUM	530	1010

Source: Huaihai bao, 7 December 1943.

Despite his recollection of the Shiyao Town as a great achievement, Nie, nevertheless, recognized that the mobilization did not go smoothly. In Xiangshu Village, an old peasant was tied up by a village cadre to the township administrator after he protested his son's enlistment at the village office. This episode ended with the release of the old peasant. Village officials claimed that the father finally agreed to let his son join the army after patient persuasion by the town cadres, and the village cadre received criticism for his coercion. They failed to mention, however, the extent to which the masses' fears of higher authorities played a role in these compromises, or how often such episodes occurred during conscription.

Internal reports from local branches frequently recorded instances of coercive actions during recruitment. Liu Ruilong, the deputy secretary of the Huaibei Regional Party Committee, outlined these actions in six words: "push (*ji*), lift (*tai*), struggle (*dou*), tie up (*bang*), lock up (*guan*), and hang up (*diao*)" (Liu Ruilong 1944). In mobilization

meetings, participants pushed each other to volunteer, though no one actually wanted to volunteer themselves. When it came to an impasse, some participants conspired against one target and lifted him to the front stage. If the “lift” still did not motivate anyone, they arranged a struggle meeting. They even tied up, locked up or hung up some candidates on a roof. Some towns adopted indirect methods of enforcing recruitment. For instance, in one town, authorities stopped issuing Traveling Documents, which seriously impeded people’s daily life and work. Some even shut down market day several times, in their attempts to get villagers to register for enlistment. Below, Table 14 and 15 show the results of two conscriptions near the end of the War in two counties of Suzhong and Subei Regional Bases. Unsurprisingly, when these forms of coercive conscription came to an end, the NFA faced another problem: desertion.

Table 14: The Enlisted Number of Rugao(dong) County (1944, Suzhong)

		North Chengdong	North Shuangcha	Benfeng	North Juema	Fengdong	Juedong	SUM
<b>Town No.</b>		20	12	11	12	12	10	77
<b>Mobilized Town No.</b>		17	12	11	12	11	10	73
<b>No. of The Mobilized People</b>	Ordinary people	490	126	178	208	298	118	1418
	Cadres	25	10	10	2	10	2	59
	Sum	515	136	188	210	308	120	1477
	Party and League Members	36	11	2	3	23	4	79
<b>No. of The Enlisted People</b>	Ordinary People	292	91	94	145	215	108	945
	Cadres	26	7	7	2	8	2	52
	Sum	318	98	101	147	223	110	997
	Party and League Members	31	7	2	3	18	4	65

Source: Rugao xianwei gongzuo baogao (Working report of the Rugao County Committee), stack in the Jiangsu Provincial Archives, no. 606-2-1.

Table 15: The Enlisted Number in Huai'an County (1945.3, Subei)

Sub-district	Jiqiao	Shunhe	Machang	Jingkou	Qingong	SUM
Enlisted No.	75	95	95	95	40	400*

Source: Zou Ping 1945c.

\*This figure was only 70% of the quota and 108 out of 400 were party members.

The ceremony of sending out enlistees was the last phase of conscription. To some extent, it determined the success of future recruitment by convincing the masses that the conventional wisdom, “good men never join the army,” was no longer valid under the Party’s governance. The whole village or town was required to attend the ceremony to witness the enlistees and their families’ most glorious moments. In most cases, the enlistees rode donkeys or satin sedans with local gentry or party cadres leading the halters or carrying the sedans. The inversion of the status of peasants and the gentry constituted an honor that ordinary peasants would never otherwise enjoy. In an isolated traditional society immersed within Chinese agricultural culture, this ceremony fulfilled ordinary peasants’ dreams of “glorifying ancestors” (*guangzongyaozu*). This instance is illustrative of the process whereby local cadres used communal values regarding personal career, family prestige and social status into a popular cultural ritual to facilitate of political mobilization. Such a combination largely facilitated the Communist penetration and won over popular support during the War.

In his investigation of Nationalist intelligence reports, Chen Yung-fa confirms that conscription in the CCP was much more impartial in regards to whether their targets were rich or poor and much less coercive than the Nationalist Party (Chen 1986, 404-405). However, as I have demonstrated above, the acknowledgement of less coercion

does not preclude the existence of reluctant enlistees, whose enlistment was driven by oppression from authorities or the hope of material benefits. In order to construct the image of a voluntary army that enjoyed massive support, the CCP evaded the topic of desertion when discussing its history. Scholars of China, thus, can only speculate on this subject based on scant resources. Using Mao's claim that the Communist troop declined in size from 500,000 to 300,000 between 1940 and 1942, Tetsuya Kataoka estimates that the Eighth Route Army suffered large losses from desertion in the middle of the War. Considering the context of this figure—to accuse Pei Dehuai of launching the 1940 offensive in the Rectification Campaign, he recognizes that the figures might be exaggerated. However, his estimation is not entirely off base since the desertion rate of one newly established guerilla unit and one main force unit in a border region of the north was 20.8% and 16.4% respectively (Tetsuya 1974). Chen argues that desertions in the Fourth Division of the NFA exceeded combat casualties in 1943, and a total of 477 soldiers from five counties of the Huaibei Regional Base deserted in 1944 (Chen 1986, 401). Indirect evidence supports Tetsuya's estimation. During the first half of 1945, the number of "returning soldiers," a euphemism for deserters who rejoined the army, in Rugao(dong) County was eighty six.<sup>22</sup> The number of those who deserted and refused to be drafted again must be much higher.

Why was desertion so prevalent? Tetsuya attributes desertion to soldiers' profound attachment to their villages and families. When relocated to other areas, they

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<sup>22</sup> Table "Rugao(dong) xian 1945 nian shangban nian canjun renshu tongji" (Statistics of the Number of the Enlistees in Rudong[gao] 1945.1-1945.6). Stack in Rudong County Archives, no.102, 34.

became indifferent and apathetic (Tetsuya 1974). There can be no doubt on this point, as the attachment to home was the most powerful obstacle against recruitment. Chen adds that the abuse and corporal punishment that rookies experienced further motivated them to desert. Meanwhile, some NFA families and relatives received so many threats that it gave soldiers little choice but to desert. He contends that the Party's improper handling of desertions, particularly burning, assaulting, binding, or even killing deserters, aggravated this problem (Chen 1986). I did not find solid evidence to prove the Party's coercion on deserters' families. However, corporal abuse of subordinates did exist between officers and soldiers, soldiers and ordinary people, or even military and administrative personnel. One article published in *Yanfu Bao*, the official newspaper of the Yanfu District Branch, emphasized that senior soldiers' attitudes towards new enlistees was extremely decisive in reinforcing the latter's decision to stay in the army.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the harsh treatment of rookies was very likely another cause of desertion.

In the Party's regular reports, desertion became a problem that the NFA could not evade. In one report analyzing this issue, the Party provided its own explanations:

1. Political vacillation: some soldiers were worried about the transition from great national resistance warfare to a shameful civil war between the CCP and the GMD. Under such circumstances, they felt disappointed, pessimistic and desperate about the future.
2. Reluctant for political education: due to their low literacy levels, many soldiers were reluctant to study current affairs and political situations. Being frustrated, they ran away.
3. Incorrect ideology: some comrades, especially those coming from big cities, such as Shanghai, still stuck to their bad habits nurtured in the traditional Chinese

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<sup>23</sup> "Zenyang Gonggu Xin Zhanshi" (How to nurture new soldiers), *Yanfu bao*, 10 March 1944.

society. They were the most corrupt and feudal and refused to make any progress. Once criticized, or agitated by others, they chose to desert.

4. Afraid to die and unable to endure hardship: some comrades had not been fully prepared for the dire conditions of the War. Harsh surroundings and tough struggles aroused their embedded oscillation, which eventually led to desertion.

5. Forced enlistees: some soldiers were drafted by cheating, threatening and coercion, rather than education or persuasion. They ran away once an opportunity arose.

6. Incorrect management and education: some comrades deserted due to personal affection towards their superiors, frictions between their colleagues, and greed for money and an extravagant life.<sup>24</sup>

To prevent their desertion, new enlistees were enthusiastically welcomed by their host troops, and the first-phase military training was kept relatively light as to help them adapt from ordinary peasants to soldiers. In order to appease their longing for home, they were encouraged to write letters to their families.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the Party relied on public struggle meetings to deter desertion. Typically, anti-desertion struggle meetings followed a similar pattern. The meeting began with a song called “Anti-desertion.” The director then gave a speech on the current state of international and domestic affairs and provided instructions on how to develop military forces in base areas. Then he told the crowd the basic information about deserters and narrated how they ran away. Next he invited the participants to share their thoughts on desertion. In one of such struggle meetings, one man reflected, “when their troop was

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<sup>24</sup> Jiahua, “Taopao de yuanyin” (Reasons for desertion), *Dongjing bao*, 28 April 1941.

<sup>25</sup> “Zenyang gonggu xin zhanshi” (How to nurture new soldiers), *Yanfu bao*, 10 March 1944.



located in A Town<sup>26</sup>, they were quite satisfied since they lived a comfortable and relatively free life. More importantly, they were near their hometown. When their troop was reorganized into B Team, their lives and responsibilities became regularized and formalized...they could not endure the hardship. Together with others' agitation, they decided to desert.” After other participants provided their opinions about desertion, the director concluded that there was no future for desertion, and only revolution would lead to freedom and liberation. In response, some participants suggested that the deserters be executed. Some argued for extra corvee service as punishment. Others pushed for forgiveness. Based on these opinions, the director announced that they should be sentenced to a six-month corvee, a move that meant to show the Party's lenience. Finally, the deserters expressed their regrets and pledged to be new men.<sup>27</sup> Such public humiliation and the possibility of a death sentence confirmed the Party's formidable authority and helped to deter potential desertion.

As I have shown above, the Party explored various methods to mobilize peasants for their local militia and conscription, from invoking sacred nationalism to offering tangible material incentives, or even issuing threats and bribes. Nevertheless, not all peasants enlisted for exactly these reasons. One senior soldier from Shahe (Yanfu District, north Jiangsu) frankly expressed a different motive: “I joined the army for three reasons—more money, better food, and a relaxed personal life.” Another man said it even more simply: “I can stay in the army as long as my superior offers me a pack of cigarettes

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<sup>26</sup> The document does not have specific names of the town or the team mentioned in this quote. Here I use A, B, C... to refer to such situations.

<sup>27</sup> “‘Fantaopao’ dahui suxie” (A sketch of ‘anti-desertion’ meeting), *Dongjing bao*, 28 April 1941.

each day (Li Xuesan 1944).” To obtain extra money, some militia members blackmailed ordinary peasants and collected extra taxes in amounts even higher than the official tax load in some places. In addition, the new identity of local militia or NFA soldiers endorsed these ordinary youngsters with authority that they never possessed before. The closing conscription ceremonies endowed the new enlistees and their families with an unprecedented aura in their villages. Some militia cadres became celebrities in their communities, making speeches at every meeting, meddling in village affairs and even interfering in local administration. Nevertheless, these benefits sometimes did not last long enough to counteract the hardships of military service, particularly, the labor shortage their families experienced after they were drafted. Although the Party’s laid out various privileges to entice them, peasants joined the army with their own expectations and calculations. Desertion occurred when they found such aspirations intangible.

#### ***KONGSHI QINGYE*—DURING THE ANTI-PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN**

During the 1940s, the triangle competition among the Japanese, the CCP and the GMD gradually became a struggle between the first two parts. Chen Yung-fa argues that the fading GMD influence, politically and militarily, resulted from its inability to attract popular support and build a strong local infrastructure (Chen 1986). Under the double attack of both the Japanese Mopping-up Campaign (*saodang*) and the Communist offensive, Han Deqing, the Nationalist Governor of Jiangsu, and his troops had to retreat from north Jiangsu. When the NFA captured and then released Han and his major staff officers in 1943, the GMD had given up their competition for manpower with the CCP and the Japanese almost completely. In his report of anti-mopping-up and anti-

pacification campaigns, Su Yu, the chief commander of the First Division of the NFA, wrote that the situation in central Jiangsu “had shifted from a triangle military struggle to a two-part political competition” (Su Yu 1943b). Therefore, when the Japanese initiated the first Pacification Campaign in Suzhou-Changshu-Taihu area on July 1, 1941, their main target fell on the CCP.

With the protracted front in China and the Pacific, the Japanese realized more than at any other time that the ability to deliver constant manpower and provisional supplies would be the decisive factor in winning the War. In order to ensure peace in neighboring Jiangsu, they launched the Pacification Campaign via the collaborationist government in mid 1941. In contrast to the Mopping-up operation, which was a short-term intensive military action aiming at anti-Japanese forces, the Pacification Campaign was a long-term continuous program that involved almost every aspect of people’s life including military, economic, cultural and ideological disciplines. The Chairman of the collaborationist government, Wang Jingwei, once claimed, “The Pacification Campaign aimed at ‘maintaining public safety and improving economic well-being,’ and, therefore, was “30% military (action) and 70% political (doctrine).” The Japanese intended to indoctrinate the masses with the idea of “Sino-Japan harmony” and “the Great East Asian Spirit” in order to attract more popular support. They publicized, “The Pacification Campaign should be compared to the treatment of a patient...which nurtured his vitality and endowed him with a healthy spirit and a strong body” (Zhonggong changshu shiwei dangshi ziliao zhengji xiaozu bangongshi 1984, 13-3, 15-16). Mistaking it for the type of mopping-up campaign they had experienced before, the Communist forces and cadres

suffered considerable casualties and other losses in the first Pacification Campaign in Su-Chang-Tai region.<sup>28</sup> When they fully realized the intentions of the Japanese, the CCP launched an anti-pacification movement to compete for manpower, supplies and their very survival. Pacification and anti-pacification campaigns, therefore, became a continuous theme in the power wrestle between the Party and the Japanese throughout the War.

As a result, the masses faced a distinct division: The CCP or the Japanese? For ordinary people either choice could lead to the sacrifice of their property, or even their lives. In order to increase popular support, the Party sought to minimize the potential for loss while emphasizing possible gains. Meanwhile, they had to ensure that this balance would not contaminate the Party's image of a fearless, anti-Japanese fighter and a considerate mentor who cared for her people. The case of "emptying houses and clearing fields" (*kongshi qingye*) in A Town of Ruxi County, the Third District of the Suzhong Regional Base provides an ideal window that demonstrates the process whereby local cadres mobilized the masses in order to augment their possible benefits and minimize their losses.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> According to "Qingxiang Liang ge Yue zhi Huigu" (A Retrospection on the two-month Pacification) published on *Yu bao* on 11 September 1941, the Japanese and collaborationist government achieved: "1. 100 corpses discarded by the bandit troops (the Communist forces); 2. 1,800 captives; 3. 800 surrenders; 4. 4 canons; 5. 8 Czechic light machine guns and 184 rifles; 6. 40 pistols; 7. Medicines; 8. 1,041 pieces of uniforms; 9. Current cash 250,000; 10. NFA issued currency 15,000." It could be exaggerated considering that the Communist forces did not have canons then. However, conservative estimation from the Party confirmed that the CCP at least lost hundreds of soldiers and cadres, and more than 200 guns, around 20 of which were machine guns.

<sup>29</sup> The following content is composed based on a working report of a local branch of the Suzhong Regional Base. This report was internally circulated among Party members and the recorded incident was regarded as a successful model of anti-mopping-up campaign. Reference info: Zhonggong suzhong san diwei xuanchanbu. 1944, stack in Jiangsu Provincial Archive.

### Pre-campaign Mobilization

A Town once comprised a critical area for the Party with an active local administration before the Pacification Campaign. Based on their intelligence reports, higher authorities speculated that B *Zhuang*<sup>30</sup> in A Town might have been a strategic target for the next Pacification Campaign. Therefore, at the end of May 1943, the sub-district committee went down to A Town to convene a meeting with the branch cadres, making arrangements for the incoming anti-mopping-up struggle.<sup>31</sup> After explaining the possibility that B *Zhuang* would be a target in the next mopping-up campaign, the sub-district committee demanded that the town's next major task would be to mobilize the masses for "emptying houses and clearing fields." They also decided on the way of emergency communications during the anti-mopping-up campaign between the sub-district committee and the town branch. Finally, the branch cadres were divided into two groups for leading people in escape when the Japanese and collaborationist troops actually came, one located in the north of the town and one in the south.

After returning to their villages, the branch cadres summoned meetings at different levels to ensure the message was conveyed to each villager of A Town. The first round of mobilization was among party members. The branch cadres gave a clear definition of "emptying houses and clearing fields:" all clothes, grains, mobiles, ropes, clothing bags, etc. should be dispersedly hidden in nearby villages; swine should be sold and cattle should sneak away with villagers; no one was allowed to stay if the enemy

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The name of the town is not revealed in the document. Therefore, I have to refer to it as "A Town" instead.

<sup>30</sup> Again, the name of the village is not disclosed in the document. I refer to it as B *Zhuang*. *Zhuang* is an equivalent to village (*cun*) in Chinese.

<sup>31</sup> This date is based on lunar calendar. For solar calendar, it should be around the end of June or the beginning of July in 1943. All the dates in this case study are based on lunar calendar.

came. “Emptying houses and clearing fields” was designed to deny the Japanese access to any potential manpower or supplies. The party members were instructed to lead the retreat when the enemy actually came.

The second phase of mobilization targeted ordinary villagers. A mass gathering was held in B *Zhuang* in the name of the Peasant Resistance Association. After publicizing a detailed description of the importance of “emptying houses and clearing fields,” the presiding cadre offered to organize a model self-defense team exclusively for the upcoming anti-mopping-up campaign. This proposal was immediately echoed by several party members, who were prearranged to take the lead in joining the team in the previous branch cadre meeting.<sup>32</sup> Their enthusiastic responses encouraged fellow villagers, and another eight agreed to join the team at that gathering. The villagers were advised to retreat to their relatives’ homes if possible or ask for help from nearby *bao* and *jia* heads. After the gathering, the cadres of the Peasant Resistance Association went to each village for further mobilization, holding meetings for association members of each *bao*.

Through the meetings at different levels, the message of “emptying houses and clearing fields” was conveyed successfully to each resident of the town. Apparently, it required considerable sacrifice of the peasants. Not only did they have to leave their homes and land unattended; more importantly, they were forced to leave their villages, where most of them had been lived since they were born, and head for relatives’ homes,

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<sup>32</sup> These party members’ identities were kept confidential for safety purpose and preventing isolation from the masses. As such, their activities were regarded as spontaneous responses rather than pre-set arrangements of the Party.

where they might not be entirely welcomed. Others had nowhere to go. How did they react to such a policy?

Even party members were not unanimously in support of the Party's mobilization. Although some had made firm resolutions and psychologically prepared themselves for the worst scenario of burnt-down houses, quite a few took a wait-and-see attitude and lacked confidence in the prospect of victory. One man worried, "if the Japanese really came, my house might be destroyed. But it is worse that some bad guys might report to the Japanese that I am the syndic (*lishi*) of the Peasant Resistance Association." Ordinary peasants understood the fact that peaceful days would be gone permanently if the Japanese and their collaborationist forces were stationed in the town. However, even if they opposed the occupation of the Japanese, the "wait-and-see" attitude was the most popular among the masses. Relying on the previous experience that the enemy passed by twice, they believed that the Peasant Association was exaggerating the state of danger. They insisted that the Japanese would not stay stationed, even if they came to their town. Some people, including ordinary peasants and some local gentry without much property, were scared by the mobilization and counted on the defense of the NFA. Meanwhile, several landlords and ex-GMD members were looking forward to the Japanese's arrival, hoping to rescind the Rent-Interest Reduction policy and increase rent again. With the exception of the branch cadres, most party members and ordinary people were quite indifferent to the mobilization, especially to the call to "emptying houses and clearing fields."

The branch cadres, therefore, decided to take concrete action rather than simply propagandize with words. The party members of B *Zhuang* were called upon to take the lead in “emptying houses and clearing fields,” and two responded to the call. After loading all their belongings into a wheelbarrow, they deliberately detoured to make a scene in front of the villagers, persuading them to hide everything in nearby villages as they had done. This performance created a sense of imminent emergency among the masses, which more successfully mobilized them. In the following days, the majority of villagers retreated with their property. The only holdouts were a group of landlords who did not believe the Peasant Association and simply buried some expensive belongings at home. Peasants, regardless of party members or not, were actually unaffected by abstract ideas of mobilization, but seemed alert to their neighbors’ behavior. In this case, no one moved until the two party members took the lead. The key point here was that the two party members were ordinary peasants in the masses’ eyes, which partly explained why the identities of party members had been kept a secret. In such a pre-set scene, the effect would have been largely discounted if the masses knew the initiators were party members. Their habitual consciousness of following would work only if they identified the person who took the lead as one of their own, rather than with the authorities. In fact, this was an imperative strategy that the Party constantly relied upon in this campaign as well as in the course of penetrating local society.

### **The Process of the Anti-mopping-up Campaign**

When the Japanese and collaborationist forces arrived in Shuidongkou, a place close to A town, on June 21, the party branch summoned another cadre meeting to make



arrangements for a massive retreat. The message spread rapidly, and the whole town was packing and preparing to evacuate the next morning. At lunchtime, a troop comprised of more than one hundred Japanese and around two hundred collaborationist soldiers headed for B *Zhuang*. When they arrived, there were only two blind old men and five or six old women remaining in the village. The enemy was so outraged by such a complete evacuation that they beat those old people. During the first couple of days, the self-defense team harassed the collaborationist forces by throwing grenades at midnights. They also intercepted a wheelbarrow of supplies that the Japanese extracted from the masses and released two forced laborers.

Among the escaping villagers, the debate about whether to accommodate the Japanese and collaborationist forces never ceased. Although they firmly opposed aligning with enemy, the local cadres tried to avoid a definite answer and turned over responsibility to high-ranking authorities. The secretary of the party branch even suggested the town chief hide for a while in order to evade these insistent inquiries. Meanwhile, the masses' attitudes vacillated depending on the enemy's action. At first, the Japanese claimed that they came to provide people with a secure environment for agricultural production. However, they also warned that their houses would be burnt down if the people refuse to return. In the following days, the collaborationists only caught five or six peasants for corvee. Irritated by the current situation, on the third day, the collaborationist troops sent an ultimatum. It stated that all the villagers must come back by the end of that day, or their houses would be burnt down. The villagers were scared and asked for advice from the town chief. After conferring with the branch

secretary, the town chief insisted that the enemy was bluffing. He patiently explained to the villagers, “If they really had burned down the houses, where would they live?” With this, the masses were temporarily convinced. However, the longer the villagers stayed out of their homes, the more they were inclined to go back and accommodate the enemy.

The turning point came on the fourth day. Most villagers had been forced to crouch in the sorghum fields, without shelter, since leaving home. Four days of dread and anxiety had pushed their endurance to the limit. Resolutions of resistance turned evaporated. Some suggested returning to accommodate the enemy. Some cursed the Japanese and collaborationist forces. Some blamed the NFA for not having arrived sooner. Some raged at the town chief and the Peasant Resistance Association, and others were pessimistic about their doomed fate. Only a few were willing to insist on resistance. The villagers became panicked when they heard that a collaborationist force of four to five hundred soldiers led by Chen Caifu was coming to assist the Japanese. Therefore, when a troop of five to six hundred soldiers, together with several horses, paraded into B *Zhuang* carrying the Japanese Army Flag in the morning of the next day, five villagers slipped away to accommodate the enemy. They did so under the abetment of the *bao* head, Lou, who had already tried several times to persuade the town chief of accommodation.

Under such dire circumstances, the branch secretary decided to initiate an informal branch cadre meeting to organize counteraction. During the meeting, some activists reported the details of the *bao* head’s meeting with the Japanese. In this original report, he said:

The *bao* head bought three chickens and a basket of eggs and went with his followers to B *Zhuang* to receive the collaborationist troops. Once they arrived, they were introduced to the Japanese's interpreter. The interpreter asked, "Who are you? Why didn't you come to welcome us until today? We came to protect the masses. Do not be afraid! Who is the *bao* head?"

"I am the *bao* head and the others are ordinary people." The *bao* head answered.

"Three of you stay and the other three go back to find the town chief. You should ask him to call on the villagers to return home. We should not harass them. We came to protect people and give them a secure and happy life as long as they help us build casemates and trenches."

Considering the current emergency, the branch cadres unanimously agreed on a revised version of the story and spread it out as quickly as possible. Here is the episode that the villagers would hear:

Look, the *bao* head, Lou, wants to be a collaborator and accommodate the enemy. What is his fate? He winded up being hung there, almost beaten to death. Now he is still there, being interrogated for the information on the town chief, other *jia* heads and all the villagers. The Sub-district Office later will arrest him for not executing the government order of resistance and surrendering to the enemy. That is the doomed fate of accommodating the enemy. Who intends to compromise with the Japanese and collaborationist forces? Who plans to accommodate the enemy? The *bao* head, Lou, is an example of what will happen: being beaten and hung there. Therefore, there is no other way out except for sticking with resistance—not returning home, not compromising with the enemy, and not collaborating. In such circumstances, the Japanese and collaborationist forces will not be able to stay for long.

The masses were frightened by the atrocious treatment that the *bao* head received when he surrendered to the Japanese, and, as a result, their desire to return home was temporarily suppressed. Immediately after the meeting, the branch set out to report the situation to higher authorities and received orders to maintain their position for a few more days.

The sixth day became a critical moment in the anti-mopping-up campaign. That morning the pro-accommodating landlords directly confronted the authorities of the town chief and the peasant association cadres. Alarmed by the fact that an increasing number of collaborationist forces were marching into their hometown, the masses gradually lost interest in staying in the sorghum field and wanted to return home. One landlord of B *Zhuang* was aware of this emotional oscillation and took this opportunity to advocate for accommodation. He began by describing the miserable situation of the masses,

“Considering current circumstances, the chance that the enemy will leave soon is quite slim, and in most cases, our anti-accommodating movement will wind up a failure. Now we are living in a field without food to eat, a place to live, or clothes to wear. If things continue, we will have nowhere to go, except to die of starvation, illness or inclement weather. Now our stocks are tired out under the enemy’s extraction and our swine have starved.”

Then, he shifted his focus to attack the town chief’s evasion.

“The town chief is the head of our town, who should step up to lead us under such circumstances. However, he avoided meeting us, disregarding our hardship. The peasant association members, who cannot return home anyway, trapped us here to endure these difficulties with them. The collaborationist forces are also men. We can reason with them. What kind of hatred would they hold towards the masses? All their so-called atrocities are creations of the peasant association cadres, fabricated to prevent us from returning home. We masses are ordinary people without the ability to defend ourselves. How could we stop the enemy from being stationed here if they decide to do so? Let us find the town chief and make him contact the collaborationist forces to figure out what on earth we should do!”

The masses were convinced by his argument and accused the town chief of being irresponsible. Some villagers even suggested tying up the town chief and sending him to the Japanese.

Faced with the impending chaos, the branch cadres and the town chief decided to summon a public gathering to appease the masses’ discontent. A few party members who

were not publically pro-party were arranged to advocate for continuing resistance. The meeting was held in a nearby village that night and more than one hundred villagers attended. The landlord who tried to persuade the masses to accommodate the Japanese was the first to give a speech. He tried to win over supporters by reiterating the hardships that the villagers had experienced over the past six days and restated the inevitability of accommodating the Japanese. His argument was repeated by a few other landlords, rich peasants and *bao* heads. The pre-arranged party member stood up right away to refute his argument. He began by relieving people's worry about the possibility of the enemy's being stationed in B *Zhuang*. "The enemy will leave soon. At this point, six days have passed since they arrived. However, there is no casemate or trench under construction. The collaborationist troops do not plan to be stationed here. This is the accomplishment of our insistence on 'emptying houses and clearing fields.' Why don't we stick it out a few more days to decide the next move?" He further borrowed legitimacy from the higher administration, which strictly forbade accommodating the Japanese. Then, a tangible question—how to afford the accommodation—was brought up to deepen the masses' reluctance. Finally, he proposed a compromising solution, asking for further advice from higher authorities. In doing so, he prevented a possible rush decision in the meeting. His contention was immediately supported by other party members and peasant association cadres. It, therefore, convinced the masses. The town chief then gave the final notes:

"I am not in favor of accommodating the enemy. Let us see. How much money is left in your family? I can go to contact the Japanese. But, after that, you will be deprived of money. Who pushed me to accommodate the enemy? Please take out your money first. If the Sub-district Office knew that we were accommodating the

enemy, I would also be arrested for collaboration. I will die either way. Therefore, I agree with [the suggestion] on consulting the sub-district chief tomorrow.”

Eventually, arguments for accommodation were temporarily stifled.

The seventh day was full of shock, astonishment and hope for both the party members and the villagers. The news that more than ten villagers returned home regardless of the agreement reached the prior night spread to the party members in the early morning. However, before they had even begun to deal with that emergency, several runaways fled back from the Japanese control in the late afternoon. They recounted their miserable experience in the collaborationist troop,

“It was really bad. I will never go back. The collaborationist soldiers were not human beings, those bastards! They must not have been born to parents! Look at all the bruises and wounds on my body! Collaborationist soldiers dragged us to do coolie jobs as soon as we arrived home. They did not give us the chance to take care of the stocks. I was sent to carry water, several were ordered to light a fire and others were asked to grind wheat. We did not have anything to eat the whole day, nor were we allowed to rest. Any delay led to a through beating. Even if I am destined to die outside, I will never go back!”

Coincidentally, a couple of women, who had gone back for clothes earlier, ran back terrified, almost at the same time. Later, it became clear that they had been raped by three or four collaborationist soldiers. These two incidents, more so than any rational speech, provided the branch cadres with vivid examples of the doomed fate that would accompany accommodating the Japanese, and helped them to convince the masses to continue resisting. When the town chief and the branch secretary reported the Sub-district Office’s command to continue on that night, no one showed any opposition. During the middle of the night, several members of the self-defense team reported on the enemy’s

most recent maneuvers. The Japanese troops had begun to retreat northward to Huangqiao, and only Chen Caifu's collaborationist force, about three to four hundred soldiers, stayed.

The next morning, the news of the Japanese 19<sup>th</sup> Division's retreat lifted the morale of the masses. The branch cadres, in turn, further assured the villagers that Chen Caifu's troops would leave on their own if they persevered in the sorghum fields a little longer. The villagers were not as close to victory as the branch cadres led them to believe and would face other obstacles. For example, the collaborationist troops feigned a move-out to encourage villagers to come home, and they issued statements claiming that they would only target Communist resisters. Then, they randomly shot at the sorghum field, captured thirty some villagers and forced them to serve as coolies. However, these actions only crystallized the atrocity and incredibility of the enemy in the minds of the people, and no one suggested accommodation again. That night, one villager who had been captured and forced into coolies that afternoon, fled back to confirm that the collaborationist troops were leaving the next day. The branch secretary immediately called a branch cadre meeting, making detailed arrangements for people's return. The next day, when the collaborationist troops actually left B *Zhuang*, the villagers were thrilled about their victory. However, they were still astonished by the destruction the collaborationist troops left in their wake.

### **After the Anti-mopping-up Campaign**

Once the villagers resettled their homes, the Party held a series of meetings and public gatherings to share the experiences during the campaign. The *bao* head, who had

argued vigorously in support of accommodating the Japanese, received criticism from the local cadres and the masses in a public gathering. However, the Party's desire to demonstrate their lenience allowed him to retain his position. Since the campaign was led in the name of the Peasant Resistance Association, the organization's prestige reached an unprecedented peak among villagers, even landlords and rich peasants. Later, many of its cadres were elected as committee members in the township government during the New Township Renovation. Another positive aftermath was the masses' pervasive support to "emptying houses and clearing fields," which practically became a habitual behavior for villagers. The hundreds of households in the village, no matter they were landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, or hired laborers, only saved three days of supplies at home and hid the rest nearby. Later, the mobilization for anti-mopping-up campaigns received active responses from the villagers.

The Party attributed much of the credit for this success during the anti-mopping-up campaign to its correct leadership in the inner-party meetings. However, it was likely that villagers would have returned home if they had not been horrified by stories of the enemy's atrocities. Likewise, they might have chosen to accommodate the enemy if the Japanese had stayed in the B *Zhuang* a few days longer. However, no one can deny the pressure that the local cadres exerted on the villagers during the nine days in the sorghum field. Their creation of efficient connecting channels between the town branch and the higher authority, the flexibility and improvisational ability the local cadres exhibited when faced with an emergency, and most importantly, the extent of their control over the masses, were particularly impressive. On the one hand, the villagers calculated the price



of obeying the Party's call for resistance. Once the risks outweighed the possible gains, they disregarded the Party's instructions and followed their own agendas, as several incidents of desertion indicated. In this case study, peasants were clearly not simply a compliant group subject to the Party's mobilization and manipulation. Rather, they were autonomous individuals, capable of rational calculation and defending their own interests. On the other hand, the Party was also testing the limits of the villagers' endurance and adjusted its responses accordingly. The local cadres never excluded the possibility of accommodation. Rather, they simply avoided this option as long as possible. According to the campaign's summary report, the higher authorities had already prepared for the aftermath had the Japanese and collaborationist forces been stationed in B *Zhuang*. They planned to excuse these actions by claiming there was a shift in methods of struggle in order to maintain local faith in the Party. This reflected the key principle of the CCP's survival and development during the War: demonstrating its care for the masses and its resolution for resistance at minimal cost in property and lives. This principle might explain why neither the NFA nor the local forces had directly confronted the Japanese and collaborationist forces during this the campaign. Even the self-defense team, who were supposed to protect the villagers, only harassed the enemy a few times by throwing grenades. Nevertheless, such an indirect involvement also prevented ordinary people from associating these acts with the Party's leadership, as all the orders were issued in the name of the Peasant Resistance Association.

## CONCLUSION

In early 1938, approximately 8,000 Communist guerrilla soldiers, who had scattered in the eight southern provinces during the Three Year War (1934-1937), converged in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. By the time they retreated from Jiangsu Province, shortly after the end of the War, the NFA had grown expeditiously. It had become an army with seven divisions and local forces of approximately 312,000 persons, 39 times its original size. No one should deny the CCP's success during the War of Resistance. However, by focusing on different locations, we can look beyond sensational development to see nuances in the interactions between the Party and the people.

The Party manifested excellent organizational skills and strategies in mobilizing mass movement. Through years of strenuous effort, it was able to establish a full-scale political structure composed of party branches, administrative offices and mass resistance associations. These organs covered all base areas in Jiangsu. They were designed to ensure that local situations were reported to higher authorities, and policies materialized in local settings in a timely manner. Meanwhile, the strictly hierarchical political structure nurtured an atmosphere of internal competition among the cadres, such as what occurred in conscription. The Party encouraged them to fulfill their assigned tasks better to get a career promotion.

As far as ordinary peasants were concerned, the Party relied on local cadres to manipulate existing rituals, moral values, popular culture, and economic interests. First of all, it provided material rewards to peasants, such as rent reduction and assistance in agricultural production for military dependents. Second, spiritual incentives were widely

employed to encourage the masses. The farewell ceremony for draftees and the honors they received from the higher authority served as a good example of this kind of spiritual encouragement. Third, local cadres resorted to pragmatic tactics to carry out specific tasks to guarantee the success of mobilization and ensure the Party's control. The above discussion of the conscription has demonstrated that the Party's selective policy in targeting the draftees was very different from the GMD's indiscriminative strategy. The local cadres' improvisational tactics in dealing with dissenting villagers were decisive in mitigating the anxiety and uncertainty of fellow villagers and brought success in "emptying houses and clearing fields." Finally, the Party never hesitated to employ coercive measures when necessarily.

The organizational skills and strategies of Party's higher authorities were certainly significant for local massive mobilization. However, it was local cadres at lower levels who made concrete deployments of these strategies and practiced these skills. Therefore, they played a decisive role in the Communist mobilization and movements. The implementation of a policy largely relied on their digestion of the Party's doctrines and their deployment of optimizing resources, both material and spiritual, in specific local settings. The farewell ceremony for the draftees is an illustrative example of how local cadres employed existing norms of prestige, social recognition, communal responsibilities and public rituals to glorify the act of "joining the army." Based on their comprehensive knowledge of local communities, they were also able to balance the peasants' willingness to sacrifice in their struggle against the Japanese with the resources that the Party needed to extract to insure its survival and development. This balancing act

was decisive to the Communist success at the local level. The final success of “emptying houses and clearing fields” in Ruxi was mostly indebted to the local cadres’ improvisational ability towards the emergency and the masses’ emotional oscillation.

Meanwhile, in contrast to previous scholarship that argues for the CCP’s overwhelming controllability within the hierarchical political structure, my observation about the base areas in Jiangsu reveals that the Party’s control over its cadres gradually decreased, especially below the township level, regardless of its deepening penetration into local communities. Such a phenomenon resulted from a pervasive shortage of cadres, which forced the Party to rely, in part, on local elites, whose power base did not stem solely from Communist authorities. It led to the bifurcation between high-ranking party leaders’ original intentions when they composed policies and the actual implementation by local cadres. This bifurcation further induced indirect resistance from both cadres and ordinary people during the enforcement of policies at the village level. For instance, both the local cadres and the military dependants were unsatisfied with the Assistance Program. The latter even mistook it for a communal philanthropic measure sponsored by the local gentry. The higher authorities gradually became aware of this point. Thus, one of the major purposes of the Rectification Campaign was to improve the quality of the local cadre echelon.

## **Chapter Six          Self Rejuvenation: Reinforcing Internal Consensus and Centralization**

One of the most important characteristics contributing to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s success in the Chinese Revolution was its ability to self-rejuvenate by its adapting to different situations during each of its developing phases. During the War of Resistance, the CCP wisely took advantage of the Japanese military invasion to rapidly expand its personnel and political influence in rural areas where neither the Japanese nor the Nationalists had spare forces to keep stationed. As previous chapters show, the Party attracted ordinary peasants through tangible economic interests, and alleviated opposition from the landlord class by including them in council organs without endowing them with real power. It enforced popular identification with the promoted ideology by establishing new education systems and reforming the existing one. Finally, it enhanced its public image as a democratic, anti-Japanese, pioneer party through diverse propaganda channels. In order to expand its influence in local communities in minimal time, the Party put priority on quantity over quality when recruiting members. Although it brought unprecedented development for the Communist movement, the overemphasis on quantitative growth also set obstacles to the Party's improvement of cadre echelon, institutional reform and further penetration into local society. On the one hand, in its initial period in Jiangsu Province, the Party had recruited quite a few local gangsters and bullies who later stained its reputation among ordinary peasants. On the other hand, the majority of peasant party members joined the CCP without a clear awareness of its revolutionary agenda or differences from other anti-Japanese organizations. Therefore,

the CCP strenuously sought to establish a self-rejuvenating institution, through which it could reinforce its organizational consolidation, enhance party members' political identity, and expel undesirable followers. The Rectification Campaign (*zhengfeng yundong*) launched in the 1940s, to a large extent, fulfilled this task at both the central and the local level.

Scholars of China usually regarded Mao Zedong's two speeches of February 1942, "To Rectify the Working Style of the Party" (*Zhendung dang de zuofeng*) and "To Oppose to Party Formalism" (*Fandui dang bagu*), as the beginning of the Rectification Campaign. In the 1960s and 1970s, they emphasized the educational function of the campaign. They agree that the Rectification successfully unified the CCP high-ranking leaders, enhanced the "Chineseness" of the guiding ideology of the Communist movement, reduced Soviet influence within the Party and maintained the independence of the CCP from the Comintern (Chalmers A. Johnson, 1962; Mark Selden, 1971; Frederick C. Teiwes, 1976). From his populist perspective, Selden further commends the campaign arguing that it increased "communication between leadership and lower-ranking cadres as well as between cadres and the people" (195). Gao Hua pushes such ideological interpretation of the Rectification Campaign even further. He argues that Mao Zedong launched the campaign as part of a power struggle within the highest-ranking leaders against Wang Ming and his followers, who challenged Mao's authority by deprecating his lack of higher education and inauthentic explanation of the Chinese Communist movement (Gao Hua, 2000). With the help of his strategic partner, Liu Shaoqi, Mao's success in this ideological battle was confirmed by the unprecedented deification of his

personal charisma. The Rectification Campaign was no doubt significant for the CCP because its highest-ranking leaders achieved remarkable unanimity, which later served to prevent internal loss from factional friction such as what the Nationalist Party experienced in the Civil War (1945-1949). Chen Yung-fa attributes the success of the Rectification Campaign to the similarity between its educational characteristic and the self-cultivating practice of Confucianism, which facilitated the acceptance and internalization of the campaign among party members (Chen 1986). However, he does not thoroughly explain the connection between a literati cultural practice and the understanding of peasant cadres, who were mostly illiterates or semi-literates. What were the underlying purposes of the Rectification Campaign, and how it was launched at the local level?

This chapter begins with an exploration of the formation of a new elite class consisting of local party cadres. It particularly focuses on highlighting their differences from traditional local gentry. Troubled by the increasing number and power of this class as well as the low quality of its personnel, the party authority launched two campaigns hoping to eradicate undesirable tendencies and improve quality of its cadre echelon. It first dispelled unqualified cadres and party members under the name of “extracting army and simplifying administration” (*jinbin jianzheng*) to retain its tamed reputation caused by misbehaved and corrupt cadres. This campaign further strengthened the flexibility and mobility of the local party administration when faced with Japanese attacks and lowered its maintaining cost as well. The Rectification Campaign beginning in late 1943 in Jiangsu targeted political education within the Party. The Huazhong Bureau organized

numerous training classes, which took the form of criticism and self-criticism for party members aiming to deepen their understanding about the political identity and enhance internal consensus. Gradually, the focus of local rectification shifted from ideological education to anti-traitor initiatives. Using a case study of an incidence of the Youth League investigation in Siyang County, this chapter will analyze the defects and impact of the Rectification Campaign.

### **THE CCP LOCAL RECRUITMENT**

As a revolutionary vanguard party against the ruling class, the CCP firmly insisted on an oppositional stance towards landlords and gentry in local communities. Even if it took a moderate and friendly attitude toward them during the War, the Party never stopped its attempts to deconstruct the authority of traditional local elite by expanding its own theoretical power base of poor peasants and hired laborers. In practice in Jiangsu, its recruiting target extended to middle or even rich peasants in order to maximize local support and resources. According to existing documents, the Party organs operated openly above the township (*xiang*) level while keeping secret activities at and below township for the sake of safety concerns. How, then, did the Party recruit members in local communities?

Generally speaking, the Party recruited new members through three channels. First, it relied on party branches of the NFA to approach potential candidates. Second, local party branches were also responsible for recruitment. Finally, mass worker teams that directly reported to the county party committees were another major recruiting force. Most mass workers were educated youth from urban areas. County committees would



select qualified candidates, i.e. relatively capable ones with good class background, and persuade them to join the Party before sending them out on recruitment missions in local communities (Li Zhong 1988). Chen Yung-fa describes nine patterns through which the Party enlisted local members on the basis of a working report by a local cadre of Yanggang, a town in Siyang County (north Jiangsu) (Chen 1986, 299-302).<sup>1</sup> These nine patterns share three common characteristics. First, recruiters tried to identify with ordinary peasants to shorten the psychological distance between the two parties. They claimed to be the representatives of the poor or peasant resistance association. Second, recruiters intentionally withheld relevant information from the recruited. In extreme cases, the enlisted members did not even know they had become party members. Of course, there was the possibility that even recruiters themselves did not have a full knowledge of the Party's intentions. Third, many candidates joined the Party because of promises of benefits or threats. According to the working report of Yanggang, thirty-six of the fifty-nine members of the local party branch recruited in 1941 and 1942 joined the CCP for food borrowing privileges, power, a better life, revenge, and so on. This data supports Samuel Popkin's claims that peasants should be viewed as rational individuals who deliberately calculated the possibility of losses and gains before making decision (Popkin 1979). The Party was clearly aware of this fact, and thus, did not touch upon

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<sup>1</sup> The nine patterns are "1) The Party branch recruited members in the name of the peasant association; 2) The Party was presented as an organization of the poor; 3) The recruiter enlisted members without telling them they were being recruited; 4) Candidates were approached and asked to join without being given all the relevant information; 5) Candidates were enticed by withholding information or exaggerating benefits; 6) The Party recruiter used threats; 7) The Party was introduced to candidates jokingly; 8) Recruiters seized on candidates' need for help or protection; 9) Party recruiters tried to impress the candidates with the strength of the CCP."

Communist discourse and theory during recruitment. Such recruiting strategies were rewarded with an unprecedented expansion in party membership. Nonetheless, this expansion came at the price of compromising the quality of its personnel. The instance of Anle Town provides a vivid instance of the successes and failures of local recruitment.

The Anti-Japanese Democratic Government of Anle was established after the Communist troops defeated the Nationalist forces in mid 1940. Before that, the Party had already led a large-scale grain borrowing movement in March of that year, which widely enhanced its political influence among ordinary peasants. Under such relatively peaceful and secure circumstances, the CCP began its recruiting activities in the local community. The first party member in Anle was Huang Hao, a better-off middle peasant and later the first secretary of the party township branch (*xiang zhibu shuji*). Although he had been *jia* head under the Nationalist power, Huang had secretly served as the syndic (*lishi*) of the local Peasant Association since the Party began their infiltration in the spring of 1939. He also had played an active role in organizing the grain borrowing movement in 1940. Huang was recruited by a mass worker, Chen Daohe, from the nearby market town, Gucheng, who convinced Huang to join the Party by insisting that he would no longer be bullied by big landlords and providing promises of future benefits. Once Huang was enlisted, his superior, a mass worker Xu Min, assigned him the task of recruiting more wage working members with good class backgrounds. Huang first attempted to approach Cheng Ping, also a peasant association syndic serving in the model team (*mofan dui*).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Model team was a self-defense team organized by the CCP and in charge of the public safety. Sometimes it also delivered intelligence reports to the Party.

Most importantly, Cheng was Huang's foster brother and Huang considered him reliable even if he was a rich peasant. When trying to convince Cheng to join the Party, Huang said, "You will be free of oppression from landlords." To which Cheng then asked, "Are you in?" "Surely I am." Huang replied. Cheng then agreed to enlist. When the superior assigned a recruiting quota of workers, Cheng locked his focus on his good friend, Miao Wenming. Cheng mentioned the CCP to Miao in their daily conversations and received a positive feedback from the latter. As a result, Miao officially became a party member a few days later. This recruiting process vividly demonstrated the Party's flexibility and pragmatism in the initial phase of mobilization. Instead of mechanically applying its revolutionary agenda, it built and expanded its social basis on preexisting peasants' values, personal ties and power networks. This largely facilitated the Party's recruitment while bringing indigenous characteristics into its local party at the same time.

Later, the recruiting procedure was conducted more formally: middle peasant candidates were investigated by three party members; poor peasant or oppressed female candidates by one party member. When approaching potential candidates, recruiters first asked about their impression of the NFA. Once they received a positive answer, the question probed deeper, making inquiries such as "who leads the NFA." Candidates would have to pass these examinations as well as an investigation into their backgrounds before they officially joined the Party. In addition, recruiters looked for candidates according to the Party's present development needs. For instance, Zheng Huafeng, an opportunist and later accused of corruption, was recruited because he was a good public

speaker and the local Worker Resistance Association happened to need a syndic with such a talent (Rao Shushi 1944, 58-63, 120-122).

The Party designed specific strategies to facilitate its expansion in local communities. While Chen Yung-fa's nine patterns mentioned above depict how recruiters persuaded or forced candidates to join the Party, the Anle experiences explain why the Party selected these specific candidates. Since the Party operated secretly at and below township level, recruiters usually searched for candidates based on their social networks and personal relationships (*guanxi*). In addition, the Party recruited people such as Zheng for their special skills and talents with an eye towards facilitating mobilization and infiltrating local communities. Meanwhile, it preferred people who had a reputation for being tough and showed bravery in movements against landlords. Huang Hao was required to be fearless when faced with the threat of death. It was the very reason that another hooligan, Wang Liben, become a party member, got enrolled in the Resistance University for six months and was promoted to the position of the head of the township model team, despite the fact that the Party had once expelled him for betrayal during the Japanese mopping-up campaign (*saodang*) in 1940 (114-116).

Class background was another major concern when the CCP recruited new members. Landlords and rich peasants were usually denied, if not totally excluded from, party membership. The Party deliberately made itself appealing to middle peasants during recruitment. Among the forty-one party members of Anle in 1943, twenty-six had been middle peasants. Among the party branch committee, middle peasants enjoyed an overwhelming advantage, holding eight out of eleven positions (59-62). Due to the better-

off economic status of local communities, the majority of the population was comprised of middle peasants. The CCP would not successfully control local communities without their support. Furthermore, not entirely free from exploitation of landlords, they were easily motivated by promises to reduce rent and interest. As far as poor peasants and hired laborers were concerned, although the Party theoretically regarded them as the most reliable force of revolution, they had neither the resourceful social connections, nor the powerful influence in their communities needed to lead local Communist movements. Therefore, even if the Party claimed to represent the poor, middle peasants still composed the backbone force, organizing activities in Jiangsu. Nevertheless, the Party's stereotype of "class background deciding everything" made the label of "poor peasant" or "poor middle peasant" a panacea for cadres' misbehavior. The words, such as "although X has shortcomings like...since he is from the poor peasant class, he is still a good comrade..." were prevalent in working reports about local cadres' performances. Unfortunately, such a tendency to overemphasize class background and disregard personal integrity during recruitment created problems that affected daily operation of the party branches and local administrations. This shortcoming even aroused grumbles and uncertainties among the public.

#### **THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST NEW ELITE—THE ISSUES OF WASTE AND CORRUPTION**

The CCP regarded the overthrow of the ruling class and establishing a Communist government of the oppressed as its ultimate revolutionary goals. As I have shown in the previous chapters, its mass movements continuously attacked and undermined the

authority and power base of the traditional elites in local society. The Party's purpose was clear—to nurture its own power base and establish new authority in local communities. Paralleling the Party's deepening penetration, a class of new Communist elites, mainly composed of party members and local cadres, was forming regardless of the Party's initial intentions. This new elite class not only decided how to launch Communist movements in local communities, it also determined the image and understanding local people created of the Party. Unfortunately, ordinary people's feedback about these new elites was not always positive. People grumbled of their arbitrariness, squander, and corruption. How did decay occur in such a rapid and prevalent way? My analyses begin with the goals that made people decided to join the Party.

The above description shows that the CCP adopted different strategies to persuade candidates to join them. Not surprisingly, the latter agreed after realizing that the Party could benefit them in different ways. The first major reason was the prospect of pleasures, enjoyments and conveniences that came with the improved social status that accompanied party membership. After being the VIP in local communities, some cadres became captious about food supplies; some loved good clothes; and some enjoyed women. One openly claimed, "Revolution is too hard, and we deserve some payback." And another asserted, "What is revolution for? It is all about food, clothes and what we use." In winter, some cadres requested not only cotton-stuffed coats and mittens, but cotton-stuffed boots as well. One NFA regiment even sent people to Shandong Province to buy leather for boots (Su Yu 1944, 53). In Huaibei Regional Base, one county spent

more than 10,000 *yuan* for a single banquet.<sup>3</sup> Another county requested a budget of 70,000 *yuan* for expanding local military forces, tens of times more than the sum of the budget of other counties (Huaibei qu dangwei 1944a). One platoon stationed in Nantong requested a reimbursement for the cost of 1,400 pieces of meal when it was sent out for a special mission for two months. This amount could have fed them and a whole other squad based on the regular quota. The conference fee in Dingdong Sub-district (Suzhong regional base) reached 40,000 *yuan* in one month of 1942 (Guan Wenwei 1943a, 210). The massive amount of waste and the pursuit of personal luxuries had become so prevalent in party, military and administrative organs that it created an environment in which people were proud of extravagance. In addition to the influence from working colleagues, this trend can be traced directly to the party members and the local cadres' initial motives for joining the Party.

Other party members regarded their membership as a channel for collecting personal fortunes. Some claimed and took a quota of food and clothes they were not supposed to enjoy at their rank (Huaibei qu dangwei 1944a).<sup>4</sup> Some cadres took the advantage of travel assignments to make purchases along their trips and request reimbursement when returning. Others even embezzled Grain Tax stock. They sold their Grain Tax coupon in places where rice and wheat were at higher prices and bought back the same amount of grain in places where the rates were low. The price difference went

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<sup>3</sup> The currency was issued by the local base government. Its exchange rate against *fabi* (the Nationalist official currency) was not clear. According to my estimation based on the documents of the time, a set of winter clothes (including coat and pants) cost around 50 *yuan*.

<sup>4</sup> Different levels of cadres enjoyed different quotas of daily supplies and welfares, including clothes, food, toothpaste, medicines and so on, corresponding to their ranks. Generally speaking, the higher one's ranking was, the more supplies he could receive.

into their own pockets. Moreover, their manipulation sometimes facilitated the profiteering activities of illegal merchants, who secretly transported grains to the Japanese occupied areas for high profits, and thereby, seriously muddled up the Party's arrangements for grain allocation (Su Yu 1944, 56-57). In such cases, local cadres' misdeeds did not merely caused fiscal losses or tarnished the Party's reputation among ordinary people. They interfered with the CCP's strategic arrangements and endangered its survival.

There were also a group of people who decided to join the Party for upward social mobility and personal ambitions. These cadres took advantage of their official positions to build their own social network in and outside the Party for future promotions. For instance, one cadre in charge of United Front affairs allocated several hundred *dans* of rice, dozens of pigs and hundreds of thousands of cash to the friend troops (*youjun*, the Nationalist or other non-Communist resistance forces) to strengthen his personal friendship with the leaders. Another cadre of Suzhong Regional Base issued loans of several hundred thousands *yuan* at low interest rates to merchants under the excuse of embracing the United Front policy. Meanwhile, a phenomenon in which subordinates bribed their superiors with government funds in exchange for promotions within the Party became increasingly prevalent (54-55, 57). Such bribery easily led to factionalism, in which a group of cadres were connected by secret financial transactions and covered each other's misdeeds or even crimes. Furthermore, recruiters usually followed their social network's initiatives in deciding on party member candidates, which unintentionally laid the foundation for the development of inner-party factionalism. This problem stymied the



higher party authority's attempts to develop control over local cadres and prevented them from receiving accurate reports of local situations.

These three intertwined motivations were prevalently revealed in local cadres. The commander of the Allied Defense Team (*lianfang siling*) of Route East (Ludong), Yang Meisheng, was a good instance in this sense. Yang attended the Communist revolution during the Jingangshan period in late 1920s and participated in the Long March (1934-1936).<sup>5</sup> During the War, he served as a middle ranking military cadre in Ludong District of Huannan Regional Base. Relying on his personal experiences of the Communist Revolution, Yang despised the leaders of the Party District Committee. He once publically claimed, "Damned, I have been joined in the revolution for more than ten years. They kept such a high profile when coming here. I would like to kill them one day." Unsatisfied by his current position, Yang often went down to subordinate county, town and village offices extorting extra money. When the Party called for local administrators to open or invest in mutual aid corporations (*hezuoshe*) to help ease budget pressures, the headquarters of the Allied Defense Team initiated its own mutual aid corporation and started to do business in tobaccos, and even opium. Yang issued quotas of tobacco and opium sales and took commissions from the benefitting merchants. Moreover, he embezzled most the profits from these sales and gave the corporation a low

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<sup>5</sup> Jingangshan is located in boundary of Hunan and Jiangxi Province. In October 1927, Mao Zedong led troops that failed in the Autumn Harvest Uprising (*qiushou qiyi*) to this mountainous region and established the first Communist base in Party history. The next year, Zhu De and Chen Yi led the troops that failed in the Nanchang Uprising (1927) into the base area, and, together with Mao's troops, formed the Fourth Corps of Chinese Red Army. In the beginning of 1929, Mao led the major force of the Fourth Corps heading for southern Jiangxi. Jingangshan Base remained in the Party's control until 1934 when the Communist forces evacuated from Jiangxi and began the Long March (1934-1935). After that, the core area of the Communist Revolution transferred to northwestern China.

payoff, to prevent investigation from higher authorities. By the spring of 1943 when his corruption was revealed, he had sold about 200kg opium, the market value of which reached more than two million *yuan*. To cover these illegal transactions, he bribed his two direct subordinates in the headquarters and made the Alliance Defense Team his own little kingdom.

Ironically, Yang was not initially investigated for corruption or illegal business, but the suspicion of factionalism. He continuously promoted people who showed obedience to his demands regardless of their capacities and suppressed those who criticized him. Under his leadership, the military department at the county level disregarded orders of the corresponding government. They also showed little respect to the Party County Committees. Such hostilities between the administrative and military cadres gradually developed into open antagonism, organized by Yang and his followers, against the district leaders or even the Huazhong Bureau. When the Huazhong Bureau announced the new list naming the Party Committee Members of Ludong district, they alleged that it was “a totally factionalist list.” Later, when informed that the list was proposed by the Huazhong Bureau and sanctioned by the central government, they insisted on their charge and insinuated that “the Huazhong Bureau suggested the list from a factional stance and the central government sanctioned such a factional proposal” (Tan Zhenlin 1943).

Yang’s story showed the typical career path of a deteriorating cadre. At first, he enjoyed the allowances brought by his political and social status, legally or illegally. Later, when extravagantly spending public funds no longer fulfilled his swollen appetite,

Yang began accumulating wealth by taking advantage of his official position. When such illegal transactions had become big enough that he was not able to cover them up through his own authority, he began seeking partners to form interest groups and make corruption a collective behavior. However, the Party tolerated a certain degree of personal waste and embezzlement. After all, it was undergoing severe cadre shortage because of the rapid expansion and any experienced cadre was precious for its development. When corruption evolved into factionalism, which inevitably confronted the authority of higher administration, the Party ran the risk of losing control over its middle and lower level cadres, and, therefore, had to take action.

In the Fourth District of the Suzhong Regional Base, the 1942 annual report shows that the accountant of the First Tax Bureau, Wang Jinquan, ran away with 90,000 *yuan*; the chief clerk (*zhuren*) of the same bureau, Yan Baohe, fled with 25,000 *yuan*; the chief clerk of the Fourth Tax Bureau, Xing Aishen, was executed for embezzling 4,000 *yuan*; an office staff of the Tax Management Bureau (*shuiwu guanliju*), Chen Zhaoming, escaped with 29,000 *yuan*; the head of Haimen Sub-district, Xie Jun, absconded with 8,000 *yuan*; and, the head of Xinghua Sub-district, Zheng X, ran away with 30,000 *yuan*. There were four cadres executed for corruption in the Third District in June and July, 1942 (Fan Xingzhi 1942, 548).

Unfortunately, even such severe sentences did not hamper the prevalence of corruption. The first semi-annual report of the Fourth District of the Suzhong Regional Base in 1943 showed that, in the eight towns of north Juema area, there were sixteen cases of embezzling Grain Tax by township and *bao* level cadres with the sum totaling

more than 50,000kg. During the same period, corruption cases related to sub-district and above level cadres had been above ten, and, in each case, the embezzled amount ranged from ten thousands to more than 400,000 *yuan* (Guan Wenwei 1943a, 210). Su Yu, the commander of the First Division of the NFA, concluded that waste was more prevalent in cadres above county or regiment levels and corruption in those below sub-district and battalion ranks (Su Yu 1944, 61).<sup>6</sup> The Party's ability to control its agents showed a declining tendency paralleling a decrease in ranking.

The Party attributed the pervasive corruption in Jiangsu to unsystematic management and a lack of centralized revenue and expending system. It further explained that this chaos occurred because base areas were established in different times, and this disorder was therefore inevitable during the transition from traditional governance to democratic resistance administration (Zhou Yongkang 1991, 122-123). However, this explanation is far from satisfactorily explaining large-scale corruption and waste.

The ultimate reason for corruption and waste can be traced to the failure of middle and lower ranking cadres to understand their responsibilities and status in the new Communist political institution. The high-ranking Party leaders tried to construct a modern party-state, which facilitated the central government's control over local society. Therefore, the duties of local cadres were quite different than the traditional gentry who used to serve as sub-officials for the Qing government in local communities. Nevertheless, when the party recruiters approached candidates, they never touched upon

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<sup>6</sup> County and sub-district were administrative units, and regiment and battalion were military units. Generally speaking, county is the equivalent level of regiment in administrative hierarchy, and sub-district equals to battalion.

these more substantive topics and mostly focused on promises of benefits. Confined by their limited literacy and education, both recruiters and the recruited were not able to fully understand their responsibilities as party members and local cadres. From their perspective, their new identity simply brought them increasing social status and personal prestige, which endowed them with the privileges previously enjoyed by the traditional elites. Hence, middle and lower cadres did not fully comprehend fiscal budgets or jurisdictions, and therefore, used public funds however they wanted. They trespassed upon peasants' farmed land as it suited them, without worrying about destroying planted crops. They reasoned, "Revolution is to help the masses, and the masses should pay us back" (Su Yu 1944, 53-55). Meanwhile, some cadres equated caring for the masses with giving them cash. They never bargained when making purchases for the government, a fact that advantaged profiteering merchants. Some suggested increasing payment to mobilize for corvee service. A district management department (*guanli ke*) once offered almost 4,000 *yuan* for a long-term corvee (55). Local cadres' misunderstanding of their administrative duties, political identities and the Communist movement mostly stemmed from this pragmatist tendency in the Party's recruitment, which overemphasized the economic prospect of party membership while neglecting the real tasks of the CCP. As a result, ordinary peasants sarcastically commented that "the NFA used to be diligent, but now it got power and turned as corrupt and degenerate as the Nationalists..." (Su Yu 1944, 51, 58). Faced with such situations, the Party had to take action on this issue.

### ***JINGBIN JIANZHENG*—REINFORCING CENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP**

In December 1941, the CCP Central Committee issued a proposal of “strengthening army and simplifying administration” (*jingbin jianzheng*), requesting that party, administrative and military organs at all levels lay off staff and soldiers. It further requested that the base areas regard this issue as one of their key tasks for the next year in both the Party and the army. The Central Committee proposed this policy for three reasons. First, after the Hundred Regiment Battle (*baituan dazhan*) the Communists had become Japan’s number one rival.<sup>7</sup> Intense Japanese offensives rapidly diminished the area the Party controlled. Thus, personnel arrangements that served for larger population became redundant. Second, the current warfare enhanced the priority of flexibility and adaptability to the Japanese and collaborationist troops’ continuous mopping-up campaigns. Finally, shrinking base areas and frequent military attacks severely decreased peasants’ agricultural output, and correspondingly, the Party’s revenue (*Suzhong jingbin jianzheng de fangzhen yu shishi buzhou 1943, 1-2*).

The regional bases in Jiangsu did not begin to implement this policy of “strengthening army and simplifying administration” or design detailed guidelines and approaches until January of 1943. According to the working report of a regional level cadre, the Suzhong Regional Party Committee decided to make the effort to implement this policy for reasons they saw as unsuitable to announce to the public. First, the implementation of this policy worked to win over people of middle and high social status.

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<sup>7</sup> The Hundred Regiments Battle occurred in August 1940 and lasted four months. Since the Eighth Route Army dispatched more than one hundred regiments engaged in the battle, the Chinese historians name it after this number. The real military strength of the CCP was revealed in this battle and Japanese thus shifted their focus from the Nationalist army to the Eighth Route Army afterwards.

Second, it reserved human resources: capable cadres would be available for future appointments (3). At a first glance, these two reasons lacked a logical connection to the “strengthening army and simplifying administration” policy. The second one served more as an excuse for alleviating potential resistance from the laid-off cadres than a reasonable impulse. These reasons, however, should have been fully conceptualized by party cadres, especially those with a higher rank. The rationale of the first reason revealed part of the regional government’s true motivation: “We cannot make people hostile to us and make them want to betray us for being over-demanding...In the past we knew nothing but requesting cash and grains from the masses. We paid no attention to administrative expense, which was a huge shortcoming...Corruption and waste are crimes to the revolution. In the future the government will strictly legislate on these issues” (4). Moreover, according to the same report, in order to sustain regular administrative operations the Suzhong Regional Base alone needed 318 cadres to fill positions at and above the district level. Unfortunately, there were only 213 cadres in service when this policy was issued in Jiangsu in 1943 (17).

Why did the Regional Party Committee insist on this retrenchment policy when experiencing severe cadre shortage? Since the Party emphasized quantitative increase when it first arrived in Jiangsu, a considerable portion of the newly recruited party members and local cadres were opportunists, or even local bullies, without clear recognition to the Communist agenda. Unfortunately, it was these very people who, representing the CCP, came into contact with ordinary people on a daily basis. Due to their misdeeds, accusations of coercion, waste and corruption against Communist cadres

had seriously contaminated the Party's well-established reputation. Some people complained, "The new government has good intentions, but has no good cadres to implement them." Or, "High-ranking cadres of the new government are excellent, but the lower ones are so bad." Others said: "The new government says one thing and does the other (17)." All the charges targeted cadres of the sub-district level. Even worse, these comments came from people of middle and high social status, the very group that the Party worked so strenuously to win over in its contest with the Nationalist Party. Consequently, the base areas of Jiangsu regarded this policy as a feasible solution to the pervasive corruption and factionalism of local cadres, which could be enacted without arousing panic. It prevented the Party from openly admitting the existence of large-scale corruption within its administrations and mitigated the expelled cadres by leaving them with the hollow hope of a position to return to in the future.

The policy of "strengthening army" especially facilitated the improvement of fighting capacities, quality of military personnel and guaranteed supplies to the regular forces. On the one hand, it stipulated that each company expanded to 110 to 120 soldiers by selecting qualified ones from local military forces and government security guards. Each division established three to four major regiments, each of which maintained a range of 1,500 to 1,700 persons. These regular forces were under the direct control of the Huazhong Bureau. On the other hand, it required that soldiers over twenty-five or below eighteen years of age or those who were weak should be dispatched to their native places. Government security guards of all levels were merged into local military forces or guerrillas. It further ordered that guerrillas of sub-district level should only maintain a



scale of twenty to thirty people (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei 1943a, 186-187; 1943i, 2). Meanwhile, it emphasized higher political understanding and literacy level for its administrative personnel, as well as better fighting capacity and physical strength for its military forces (Suzhong jingbin jianzheng de fangzhen yu shishi buzhou 1943, 12-14). The primary aim of the “strengthening army” policy was to centralize the power of military control dispersed at different local levels and enhance the Party’s leadership over the major forces.

As for the “simplifying administration” part, the central tenet was “merging.” The party branches, administrative offices, military departments of district, county, sub-district and township levels were required to merge into one organ at its corresponding level under the leadership of the Party. In local military forces, the battalion (equal to sub-district level in administration) level unit was annulled unless necessary. Even if the battalion unit was kept in some places, the Party ordered that their offices should only set three positions: one commander (*yingzhang*), one director (*jiaodaoyuan*), and one commissioner (*tepaiyuan*). Each town was only supposed to keep three positions that were exempt from daily farm work: the town chief, the deputy and the grain management specialist (*liangshi guanli yuan*). The positions of secretary of the party branch and leader of militia were concurrently held by one of the above labor-exempt positions. The below tables and illustrations show the administrative structure of the district, county and sub-district levels.

Table 16: Structure of District Leading Organs (i)

Dept. or Position	Number
Party Clerk/Commissar	1
Deputy Clerk or Deputy Commissar	1
Organization Dept.	2
Propaganda and Education Detp.	11
Military Dept.	44
Political Dept.	5
Intelligence/Enemy Arrangement Dept.	2
Administrative Office	12
Secretary Office	3
Sum	81

Illustration 3: Structure of District Leading Organs (ii)

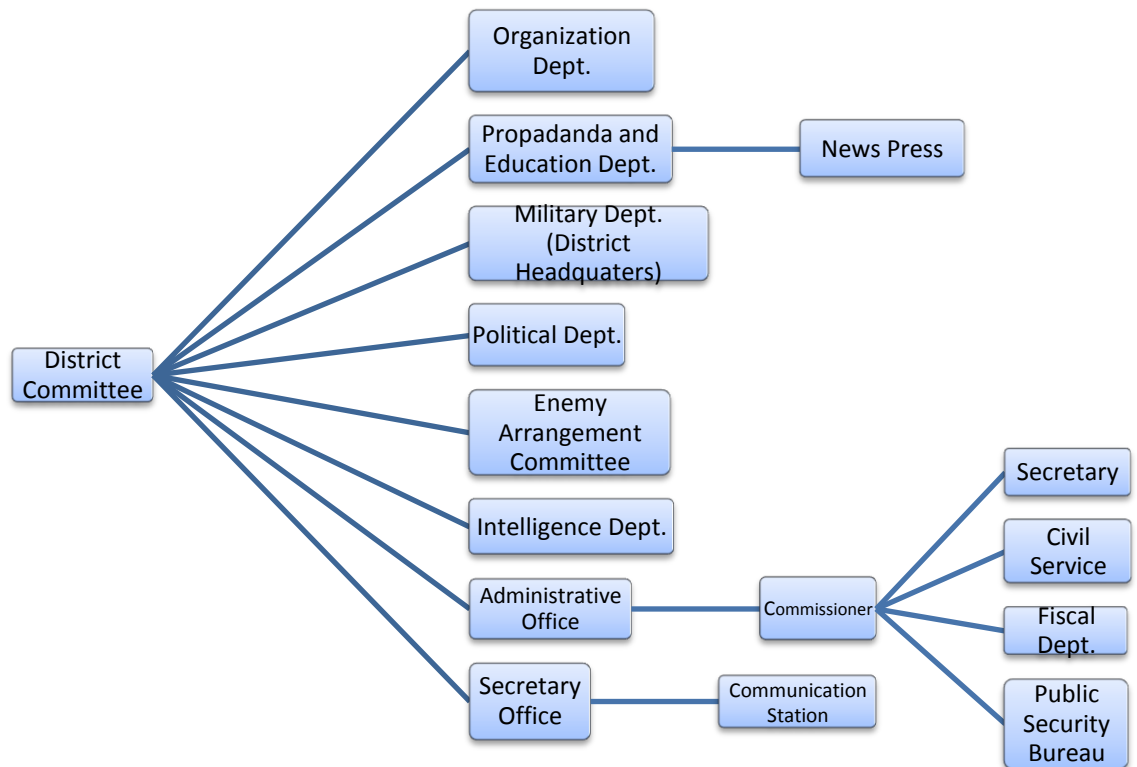


Table 17: Structure of County Leading Organs (i)

Dept. and Position	Number
Party Clerk/Commissar	1
Organization Dept.	1
Propaganda Dept. (including mass work)	1
Military Dept.	19
Enemy Arrangement Committee	1
Administrative Office	10
Secretary	1
Sum	34

Illustration 4: Structure of County Leader Organs (ii)

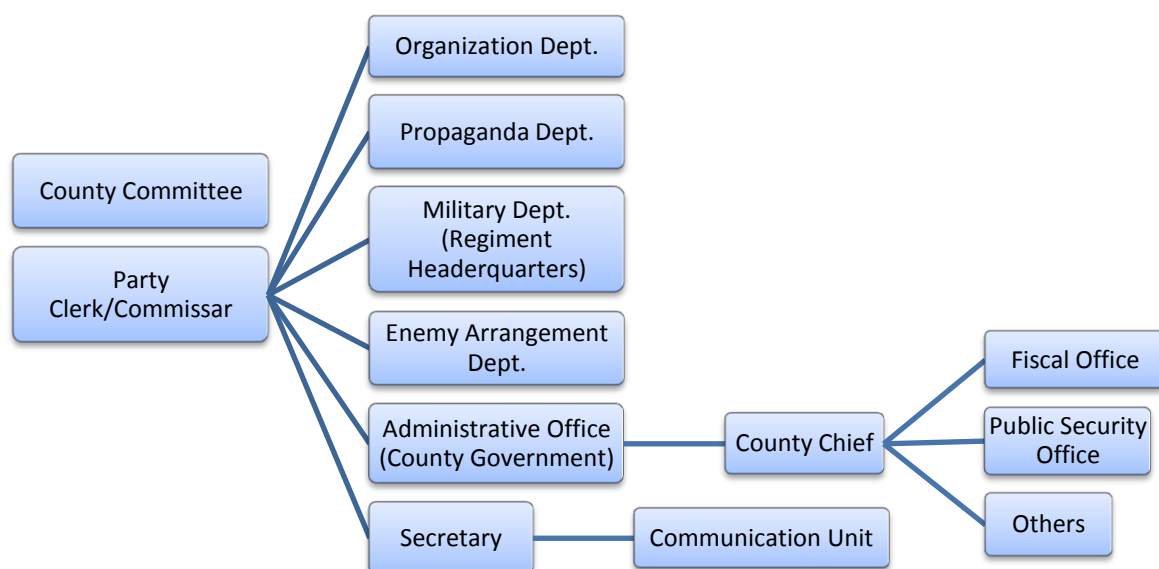
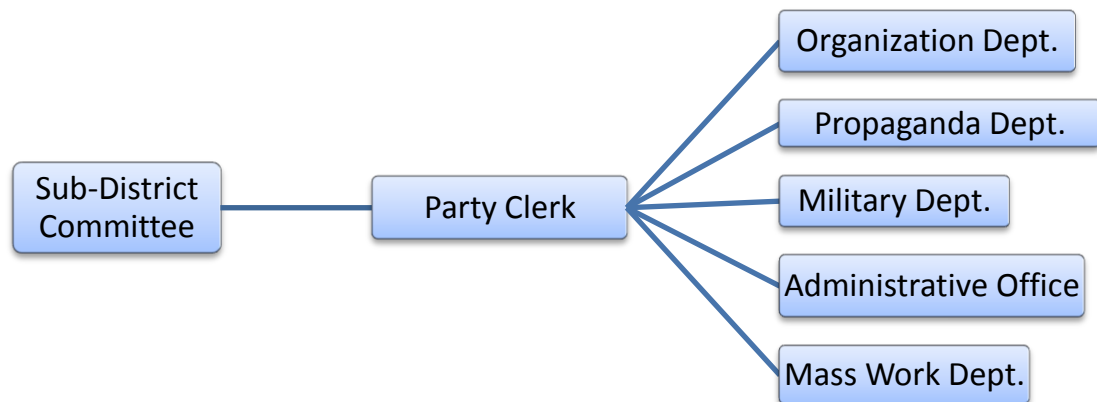


Table 18: Structure of Sub-district Leader Organs (i)

Dept. and Position	Number	Note
Party Clerk	1	Concurrently commissar of guerrilla or sub-district self-defense team.
Organization Dept.	1	
Propaganda Dept.	1	
Administrative Office	7	Concurrently sub-district government
Military Dept.	6	Serving as guerrilla
Mass Work Dept	1	Concurrently head of peasant resistance association
Sum	17	

Illustration 5: Structure of Sub-District Leader Organs (ii)



\*Sources: Table 16-18, Illustration 3-5 (Zhonggong Suzhong qu dangwei 1943i).

Laid-off party and local cadres were degraded to serve lower level positions or sent to places where the Communist influence was still weak. Their other option was to return to their native town, getting their CCP membership covered up by a social connection and await future appointment. Dismissed cadres, who were not party members, and disabled staff were persuaded to return home with considerable

compensation from the Party. For instance, disabled cadres got an indemnity of a three-month salary and relevant local government was responsible for their accommodations. For those still capable of work, the local government offered a starting capital of 300-500 *yuan* for small business, or cattle and utilities for farm work. Those unable to work received a stipend no less than the wage of their original positions (Zhonggong huaibei qu dangwei 1943b, 11-12). When dealing with disbanded soldiers, the Party arranged them in a more organized and secure way to avoid uprising or defection to the Japanese or the Nationalists. Usually, they were dispatched back to their native places and joined the local militias (Zhonggong suzhong qu dangwei 1943i, 7-8). However, even such arrangements were not able to prevent some direct or indirect resistances from affected parties in this large-scale lay-off campaign.

These resistances came from the laid-off people as well as the ones who were in charge of the implementation of “strengthening army and simplifying administration.” First of all, some responsible cadres did not make efforts to enforce this policy because they failed to comprehend its significance. Since it was first proposed in the base areas of north China, local cadres assumed that there was no urgency in enforcing it in Jiangsu. Some cadres said, “Situations are not as severe as the higher authority expected. We do not have to take immediate action. We can wait until it becomes necessary.” Others expressed their doubts about the policy: “It would absolutely impact on our current works and arrangements once ‘simplifying administration’ is enforced. We have already suffered from cadre shortage. Why bother to lay off people?” Apparently, these cadres failed to understand the underlying function of this policy—to expel undesirable

personnel without touching the waste and corruption issues of the local party and administrative organs. As a result, a considerable amount of cadres regarded it simply as a slogan and were reluctant to turn it into an enforced policy.

Second, relevant offices and cadres found excuses to counteract the implementation of “simplifying administration.” Small departments insisted on their significance, worrying that their offices would be totally dismissed from the administrative structure. Large ones asserted that their departments had already been on retrenchment and refused to corporate with further lay-offs. One department head of a county government refused to dismiss his personal orderly. He therefore suggested, “It is simple, and we can just switch the title and call him messenger” (Suzhong jingbin jianzheng de fangzhen yu shishi buzhou 1943, 5-6). This was a prevalent phenomenon: local offices and military forces underreported the numbers of their orderlies and horses, which made retrenchment a policy in word only.

Another problem resided in the improper enforcement of this policy. In the Huaibei Regional Base, some troops simply convened soldiers to line up on a playground, selected the older and weaker ones and dismissed them right away. Furthermore, some administrative offices and troops failed to make further arrangements for the dismissed personnel. They regarded it as the end of the mission when the laid-off soldiers were sent back to their native places, and did not introduce them to the local offices or the stationed troops. Neither did they ask how the former soldiers planned to make a living. Some even failed to pay the cost of the return trip for the laid-off people (Zhonggong huaibei qu dangwei 1943b). Such indifferent attitudes deeply hurt the self-esteem of the dismissed

cadres, which easily led to feelings of desperation, hopelessness or abandonment, and fostered the belief that they had been deceived because they were no longer useful. Improperly accommodated, these dismissed cadres returned to their hometown, or went to the assigned places, resentful and unsatisfied. They consciously or unconsciously passed their resentment to ordinary peasants during daily work. The masses thus regarded it as a signal of a possible retreat of the NFA, which significantly influenced the morale of local Communist movement.

The CCP Central Committee decided to enforce “strengthening army and simplifying administration” for various concerns. Despite the three clearly delineated reasons above, it is critical to remember that the United Front only existed on paper after the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941. The GMD government stopped supplies to the Communist forces and initiated the economic blockade against the Communist border regions. Distant from the Yan’an, the base areas in Jiangsu hardly suffered from the blockade. This might explained why the local cadres thought that this policy was for base areas of north China, not Jiangsu. However, higher authority found “strengthening army and simplifying administration” to be a good opportunity to solve the problems of waste, corruption, and relevant underlying factionalism in local base areas. No matter what drove the policy, its primary consequence was the centralization of military and administrative power and the enhancement of the Party’s leadership over them. Through this policy, the backbone strength of the local military was assimilated into the NFA, which was under the stringent control of the Party. Meanwhile, the merger of local administrative offices and the corresponding party branch reinforced the Party’s

dominance in local affairs. Such centralization strengthened the Party's control over local cadres through hierarchical operation and minimized room for factionalism. However, such a three-in-one pattern further obscured the identities of the involved cadres as government officials or party members (see discussion in Chapter Three), and enhanced the institutional authoritarian inclination in the political structure of the CCP. This trend was further strengthened in the Rectification Campaign.

### **THE RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN—A SHIFT FROM QUANTITY TO QUALITY**

In April 1942, two months after Mao Zedong's two important speeches, "To Rectify the Working Style of the Party" and "To Oppose to Party Formalism," the Propaganda Department of the Party's Central Committee issued a document stipulating the purposes, content, guidelines, methods and study materials of the incoming Rectification.<sup>8</sup> On June 8, the Propaganda Department officially announced the inauguration of the Rectification Campaign within the Party. The Central Military Committee immediately followed this order by moving to rectify the three inclinations in military forces at the same time.<sup>9</sup> Mao advanced a moderate slogan of "curing the disease and saving the patient" (*zhibing jiuren*) as the principle of this large-scale campaign to avoid potential resistance and conflicts from those involved. Nevertheless, as his other famous saying "one has to cross over the point of correctness to make things

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<sup>8</sup> This document is "guanyu zai yan'an taolun zhongyang jueding ji Mao Zedong tongzhi zhengdun sanfeng baogao de jueding (Decision on the discussion about the Central Committee and Comrade Mao's report on rectifying the three inclinations in Yan'an).

<sup>9</sup> The official explanation of the Rectification Campaign was to rectify three inclinations: fighting subjectivism to rectify (undesirable) inclination in study; fighting factionalism to rectify (undesirable) inclination in the Party; and fighting eight-leg style inclination in writing.



correct” indicated, he believed that the process of rectifying people’s thoughts to achieve political consensus within the military forces and the Party could never be modest.

Launching the Rectification Campaign required a relatively stable, secure and isolated environment, where all subjects could be convened for intensive ideological indoctrination. This requirement was not easy to achieve in the bases of Jiangsu, which were surrounded by Japanese occupied areas, including the capital of the collaborationist government. Therefore, the Rectification there began several months or even more than one year later than those in North China. The Subei Regional Party Committee made a reading plan of twenty-two mandatory articles targeting cadres of sub-district level and above at the end of September.<sup>10</sup> The Suzhong Regional Base did not initiate a wide-scale Rectification until July 1943, and the Sunan Region was even later. It was only beginning in January 1944 that the cadres eventually went into a regular study phase of the Rectification.

During the Rectification Campaign, party members and soldiers were required to attend study classes organized by offices one level higher, i.e. county cadres to district study class, district cadres to regional class, etc. Cadres of sub-district level and below attended study classes sponsored by their superior county party branches (Yanfu diwei kuoda hui guanyu zhengfeng wenti de baogao 1944, 143-144). Usually, each class ranged from 50-100 students and lasted for about fifty days. Students were divided into study

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<sup>10</sup> These twenty-two articles included “Zhengdun dang de zuofeng” (Rectifying the [undesirable] inclination within the Party), “Fandui dang bagu” (Fighting eight-leg [pattern essays]), “Gaizao women de xuexi” (To rectify our study) and “Fandui ziyou zhuyi” (Fight liberalism) by Mao Zedong, “Lun gongchandangyuan de xiuyang” (Discussing the qualities of a party member), and “fandui dangnei gezhong bu zhengque de qingxiang” (Fight all incorrect inclinations within the Party) by Liu Shaoqi, “Zenyang zuo yige gongchangdangyuan” (How to be a communist party member) by Chen Yun, etc..

cells (*xuexi xiaozu*), based on their work places, ranks, and literacy levels. Presiding officers assigned several students to form a provisional party branch, enhancing the presence of the Party. In addition, each cell had a leader who monitored regular studies and meetings, and coordinated between students and presiding officers. Most study classes were divided into four phases: first, students should focus their reading on the mandatory articles, making notes, holding colloquiums to share their understandings and soliciting feedback, and correcting their attitudes towards the Rectification. In the second phase, students were required to reflect on their personal histories and analyze the reasons for their mistakes and achievements according to the first-phase readings. The third phase was background investigation of students, which lasted two to three weeks. The investigation requested that each student honestly confess their defects, and conduct self and mutual criticism. In the last period, presiding officers would issue an outline of autobiography, and each student would compose a draft of their autobiography. He would then turn in his draft to the provisional party branch and get approval from each of its members. If a branch member had concerns about an autobiography, the author's cell would hold a session in which other cell members interrogated the author. After that, he would make the corresponding revisions and turn in a revised version to the party branch for further discussion or approval (Fan Zhengfu 1986). As for study classes consisting of cadres at the township and *bao* levels, the first reading phase would be conducted in the form of classroom teaching of mandatory documents and articles. The autobiography section would also be waived to accommodate their low literacy level. In such cases, presiding officers would concentrate on the process of self and mutual criticisms as well

as confessions of students' personal histories and reinforce political consensus within the Party.<sup>11</sup>

Since mandatory documents and articles were full of political jargons that were hard for local cadres to comprehend, presiding officers found other approaches that were directly relevant to their daily lives to refresh their understanding about the Party. In a study class of village cadres sponsored by the Lianshui (north Jiangsu) County Committee, teaching content focused on a discussion about the change of people's daily life after the NFA arrived. When the presiding officer asked, "How did you suffer before the NFA came," the students responded actively enumerating their hardships and experiences of being bullied by landlords and previous officials. The classroom atmosphere became heated. He then continued, saying, "How different is your current status compared with the past and why," assuming the students would continue their enthusiastic praise of the Party's achievements in improving their lives. Things did not go as he expected. The students unanimously agreed that their social status significantly increased since the NFA arrived. One commented, "We, such vulgar people, can do nothing but farm work. Who would have treated us with respect in the past? Now some of us have become political instructors, and some have become the heads of peasant associations. Those landlords finally have common topics with us! And they learned to show us respect."<sup>12</sup> However, when the discussion touched on issues of improved living standards, a great disagreement appeared among these village cadres. On the one hand,

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<sup>11</sup> Feng Yiming, "Zai jinzhang jinxin zhong de Guanyun zhengfeng xunlianban" (The Rectification training class intensely conducted in Guanyun), *Huaihai bao*, January 7 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Xinshu, "Babai cungan de sixiang jiantao" (A review on the thoughts of 800 village cadres), *Huaihai Bao*, 11 January 1945.

those who were tenants and hired laborers insisted that their lives improved thanks to rent reduction and wage increasing movements. Especially after the summer harvest movement in 1944, these peasants were able to buy eight or ten *mu* of land and became middle or even rich peasants. On the other hand, those who were self-cultivators (*zigengnong*) or from better-off families felt quite differently. Under pressure from the presiding officer, some reluctantly admitted their lives had been improved without giving any supporting evidence. Some bold students straightforwardly complained, “Our lives are not as good as in the past.” Under such circumstances, the presiding officer reasoned with the students: “You guys should speak with conscience. Even if our lives had not been improved as significantly as poor peasants or hired laborers, we were still in the area protected by the NFA...our lives would have been a mess under the Japanese mopping-ups if the Party had not defended our property...so even if our burden seemingly increased, our lives were actually improved.”<sup>13</sup> It was impossible to tell how convincing the presiding officer’s explanation was in the students’ minds. Apparently, there was a gap between local cadres’ conceptions and how the Party wished they would conceptualize the current situation.

Another important theme that was discussed in the same class was the reflection about the students’ understanding of their relation with the masses. This discussion developed on the basis of two key questions: for whom did you accomplish your tasks; and were coercive methods necessary when you enforced a policy. In regards to the first question, the answer from the vast majority was “for the superior.” They reasoned, “We

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

were led by our superiors, and they assigned us various tasks and supervised us. What else do we know?” The second most popular answer was “for the CCP.” Their argued that since their superiors worked for the CCP, they must do so also. The third largest group put “myself” as the answer because they fulfilled their tasks for career promotions. Only a small group of people mentioned “the masses.” Thus, it was not surprising that the students almost unanimously agreed on taking coercive action over the masses when it came to the second question. Some argued for its effectiveness and efficiency. One cadre, Jiang Yufeng, flaunted his experiences: “Each time, I used the force of model team (a local self-defense team) to mobilize the masses. Pure political persuasion did not work at all. The masses simply disregard you.” Faced with such a situation, the presiding officer did not rush to criticize those cadres who despised the masses. After all, they were an overwhelming majority in the class. Instead, he tried to input a *correct* idea into the minds of those village cadres by reorganizing the order of the four answers: “Initially, one worked for his own promotions; since he mostly worked under the supervision of his superior, he naturally thought he worked for the latter; since we all work for the CCP, there is no doubt that he later understood this too. Ultimately, he realized that because the CCP worked for the masses, he did also.”<sup>14</sup>

There was no *correct* answer to these questions. These village cadres’ answers simply demonstrated how they conceptualized their social and political status vis-a-vis the masses. Derived from the masses, these local cadres rapidly subscribed to the group working against the masses. Their answer to the question “who they worked for” clearly

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid..

shows that they regarded the superiors, or the CCP hiding behind their orders, as the only power source that supported their elite status in social and political arenas. Their understanding of what it meant to be a party cadre was confined to viewing these positions as a channel of upward social mobility, recognition and respect they received from the local gentry, the coercive power they exercised and the arbitrary authority they held. In essence, it was no different from the role traditional officials used to play. This supports my analysis about party cadres' ambiguous understandings of their political role in the new administration. As a result, the conflict between the rhetorically modernized institution and its arbitrary traditional substance continued to exist.

If local cadres were patient enough to go through the reading and teaching sessions, they began to show resistance during the confession phase. Previous studies have pointed out connections between the Rectification Campaign and the Confucian tradition of self-reflection and cultivation. They attribute its successful implementation to the similarity between the two (Johnson 1962; Selden 1971; Chen 1986). This explanation might work for higher-ranking cadres. For local peasant cadres who were semi-literates or illiterates, Confucian tradition hardly provided a reasonable answer. Actually, they failed to understand the significance of making a classroom confession. In a rectification study class of Guaiyun County (north Jiangsu), village and town cadres complained, "We came in order to study new theory and knowledge, what does confession have to do with them?" "Why [do they] ask about our history? Even if we made mistakes in the past, it should be all right as long as we do not repeat them now.

Why bother to confess?”<sup>15</sup> Chen Yung-fa suggests that the Party tried to establish its image as a benevolent father to alleviate resistance to confession during the campaign (Chen 1986, 338). The CCP’s lenient gesture certainly contributed to the success of the Rectification. As I show below, cadres’ rational calculation regarding their careers, the manipulating skills of presiding officers and behaviors of fellow students were equally important in deciding the result of each study class.

The most pervasive concern that prevented cadres from making a confession was their uncertainty about the Party’s leniency policy. They worried that their career prospects would be significantly disturbed or that they would be punished once they confessed their previous mistakes, even if the benevolent policy promised remission. One township level military cadre, Wang, later admitted, “I initially did not believe in the leniency policy. I thought that people who made confession would be under the surveillance of the Party regardless of this policy. Neither would they be assigned to any important position.” Another cadre’s concern was typical: “I am now a party secretary. When the higher authority assigned tasks in future, will they still place me in major positions? They might just make me a deputy.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, they worried that mutual criticism would harm their personal relationship with colleagues. In the study class in Sishu County (north Jiangsu), group leaders were reluctant to criticize their classmates

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<sup>15</sup> Feng Yijing, “Zai jinzhang jinxing zhong de Guanyun zhengfeng xunlianban” (The rectification training class intensely conducted in Guanyun), *Huaihai bao*, 7 January 1944.

<sup>16</sup> “Xiaozuzhang zuotanhui shang de jilu zhengli” (Minutes of the colloquium of cell leaders). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

for fear of embarrassing people during the first week.<sup>17</sup> One township level cadre hoped that “the higher authority should not put our confessions on newspapers or posters...if they kept doing so, where shall I show my face? I have no face among the people.” Apparently, what was at stake in those local cadres’ minds were their career prospects and personal prestige. Their decisions of whether to confess, or how thorough their confessions would be, depended on a rational calculation about gains and losses.

The continuous pressure of confession and mutual criticism sometimes pushed students towards a psychological dead end that further deterred their wills to confess. One lower-ranking military cadre, Zhu, later complained, “Why did not I confess initially? Our group pushed me too hard, which simply made me refuse to say anything. I think such compulsive enforcement was not a good idea.” The presiding cadres’ attempt to force students to confess even aroused the latter’s uncertainty about the credibility of the higher authority. Zhu’s colleague, Yin, expressed his doubts: “I felt like, why did they focus exclusively on just a few of us these days? Why didn’t they pursue others who also had problems with their mindsets? I think the superior only trusted a few specific individuals. If that is the case, they must have excluded (from questioning) some people who are not-so-innocent.”<sup>18</sup>

The behaviors of the presiding officers and classmates also exerted decisive impacts on students. Once psychological resistance occurred in study classes, the success of the Rectification would largely be determined by the presiding officers’ ability to

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<sup>17</sup> Liu Ling, “Kaizhan tanbai yundong zhong de sishu zhengfeng xunlianban” (The Sishu rectification training class which is conducting confession movement), *Huaihai bao*, January 21 1944.

<sup>18</sup> “Er’dui tanbai de tongzhi zuotanghui jilu” (Minutes of the colloquium of comrades from the second team who had confessed). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.



improvise his manipulative tactics. In a study class in Guanyun County, in order to break through the impasse of confession, the presiding officers found five local cadres, who had long revolutionary histories and were good at confession, to conduct a comprehensive, systematic self-criticism in the public meeting. Their confession aroused a “model” effect, helping other cadres to overcome their concerns about punishment, self-esteem and career prospects. The presiding officers took the opportunity to call for the participants to “be truly frank” and “bravely speak from your hearts.” The present local cadres thus continuously came to the stage to make public confessions. Most people who hesitated about confession were propelled to follow the majority under such a collective enthusiasm. Gradually, the focus of the public meeting shifted from self-confession to mutual criticism. After making confessions, the participants began to attack those who still resisted doing so. Meanwhile, the presiding officers repeatedly addressed the Party’s policy of leniency for those who had confessed. Under such collective pressures each participant chose, more or less, to admit their previous mistakes.<sup>19</sup> In the Guanyun case, the presiding officers successfully took advantage of peoples’ psychological tendency to follow the majority, which decreased their focus on self-protection, in order to enforce confession. The officers’ accomplishments here were more the result of psychological manipulation than an ideological education, the original purpose of the Rectification Campaign. A close observation about the campaign’s process makes me believe that the

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<sup>19</sup> Feng Yijing, “Zai jinzhang jinxing zhong de Guanyun zhengfeng xunlianban” (The Rectification training class intensely conducted in Guanyun), *Huaihai bao*, January 7 1944.

Party's real intention was to fully control its personnel and their personal histories, and enhance its authority and leadership among party members.

After the process of self and mutual criticism, participants were required to write a confession report including their personal history. Here are the guidelines of the social relation report and autobiography used by the Huainan Party School:

### **Confession Guidelines of Social Relation**

1. Personal relationships:
  - 1) List dependents, relatives, fellow provincials, schoolmates, acquaintances, friends who had or might have political backgrounds; their occupations; what are they now; whether do you still keep in touch;
  - 2) Your relationship with the above listed persons after you joined the Party, i.e. mail, economic connections, mutual visits, political discussions and other communications;
  - 3) Communication methods—by mail, specific messengers, communication spot; whether be checked by the higher authority;
  - 4) Any communication with the Japanese/Nationalist occupied regions;
  - 5) Communication with landlords, gentry, major merchants and gangsters in the base areas.
2. Relationship with political groups:
  - 1) Have you ever attended any political groups' activities? Your current relations with them;
  - 2) Have you ever attended any social groups (such as cultural, religious associations and secret societies)? Are you currently keeping in touch with them?
  - 3) Have you ever attended any training classes within the Party?
  - 4) How did you join the Party or/and the NFA?
  - 5) If you were arrested or captured, list your individual activities and the persons who can verify your words;
  - 6) What revolutionary educations and influences have you received before joining the Party?
  - 7) What anti-revolution educations and influences have you received after joining the Party?
3. Educational and professional background:
  - 1) When did you attend elementary, middle, high schools, and college? What are the political backgrounds of your teachers respectively?
  - 2) List your professional experiences. What are the political backgrounds of

your superiors and colleagues? Who recommended you to this position?

4. Personal communication within the Party:
  - 1) Who are your personal friends within the Party? List times and contents of your communications, eg. financial transactions, sending documents, correspondence, broadcast station, mutual visits after working hours, etc.

### **Outlines of Auto-biographies**

1. Family situations:
  - 1) Economic conditions: movable and real property, annual income, etc.;
  - 2) Family members: occupations, incomes, etc.;
  - 3) Family members who has political backgrounds, and their positions in the political groups;
  - 4) Relatives with political backgrounds;
  - 5) Communications with your family after joining the Party
2. Personal history
  - 1) Educational history;
  - 2) Professional history;
  - 3) History of political activities before joining the Party;
  - 4) Working history after joining the Party;
  - 5) Short-term training classes within and outside the Party;
  - 6) History of being captured (in the form of table, list specific dates, places and deeds).
3. List the key events that made your personal political progresses or regressions.
4. Social relations that have political backgrounds
  - 1) Classmates, fellow provincials, colleagues and acquaintances, who have political backgrounds; who are the closest to you?
  - 2) Time and contents of your mutual visits with the above listed persons after you joined the Party;
  - 3) Social relations outside the base areas;
  - 4) Communications with landlords, gentry, merchants and major gangsters within the base areas;
5. Relations within the Party
  - 1) Personal relations with other party members;
  - 2) Times and contents of mutual visits with the above list persons;
  - 3) Who are the ones closest to you?
  - 4) Who helped you make political progress, and who caused your political

regression?

6. How did your thoughts change before you joined the Party? How did you make decision to join the Party?
7. Confession about party works: working attitudes, policy implementation, working style, major progresses and mistakes.
8. Confession about liberalism: based on the twelve standards.<sup>20</sup>
9. Confession about factionalism:
  - 1) Relationship between local and outside cadres;
  - 2) Relationship between local and military cadres;
  - 3) Relationship between departments;
  - 4) Request independence from the Party;
  - 5) Relationship between worker, peasant and intellectual cadres;
  - 6) Relationship between new and old cadres.
10. Confession about individualism: individual indulgence, averageism (*pingjun zhuyi*), individual heroism.
11. Several fundamental thought changes after joining the Party: revolutionary philosophy, class consciousness, and understandings about the Party, the masses, military struggles, and the United Front.
12. Confession about personalities.
13. Personal advantages and shortcomings (*Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan* 1944).

One can tell from these guidelines that the Party had decided to investigate and firmly intervene into its members' professional as well as personal lives. The focus of the investigation was their social relations, through which the Party judged the reliability of each member. The penetration was so deep that party members even had to report the content of each personal visit. The Party thereby successfully asserted its exclusive authority vis-a-vis its members and broke any social or personal connections between

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<sup>20</sup> It is not indicated in the document what the twelve standards are.

them. It reinforced a public consensus via such rectification study classes that party members and cadres should be loyal only to the CCP, and all their social networks were under the surveillance of the Party. In this sense, the Rectification Campaign was not only an ideological indoctrination, but more importantly, it was the first time that the Party intervened into ordinary party members' personal lives under a legitimate political excuse. This rectification pattern would continue to function throughout the ideological purges in the CCP history.

However, not all study classes ended in favor of the Party's arrangements. The Party's control over local cadres of township and village levels got lessening, like in other mass movements. One sub-district party committee member in Huai'an county (north Jiangsu), Zhao, refused to read mandatory articles and documents, make confession or relate the content of the study class to his daily work. Mostly illiterates or semi-illiterates, a majority of Huai'an local cadres did not have the patience to read the mandatory documents or articles. Some even fell asleep when reading materials. One village cadre, Yan, took the opportunity of confession to express his dissatisfaction towards the Party. When composing their autobiographies and confession reports, most cadres simply told their own stories without any of the analyses the presiding officers requested. Some simply attributed all their mistakes to subjectivism. Some discussed others' problems in length in order to avoid mentioning their own shortcomings. Others included irrelevant contents in their confession reports. One sub-district chief of Huai'an country, Wang, even regarded it as a lyric essay and wrote that "time flies like an arrow, my youth and vigor passed without being noticed. How sad when I think about this" (Zou Ping 1944f,

47-48)! Apparently, the Rectification Campaign was too abstract and profound for the understanding of the local cadres, who failed to appreciate its significance. For them, concrete tasks were more important than ideological education. That might be the reason that rectification gradually shifted its focus to anti-traitor movement in local communities.

### **THE SECOND PHASE: ANTI-TRAITOR MOVEMENT**

Even in the first phase of ideological education, the study classes devoted two thirds of their time to criticism and confession about participants' personal histories. It was obviously the first step in background checks for the Party's rapidly expanding personnel. After the spring of 1943, the attention of the Rectification Campaign in Yan'an gradually shifted from education to an investigation of cadres' histories. Joseph Esherick's case study of two counties in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region shows that local rectification was mostly conducted through the anti-traitor movement (*chujian yundong*). He argues that the Party regarded these actions as a way to increase cadre activism and political consciousness, and to emphasize the significance of the resolute "party spirit" (*dangxing*) (Esherick 1994; 1998). However, his analyses pay less attention to middle level cadres who presided over the movement in different localities and the rigid mechanisms through which traitors were eventually uncovered. Based on the meeting minutes of the anti-traitor movement in the bases of Jiangsu, I will illustrate how the Party convinced the masses and silenced any potential opposition to its authority.

The first step of the anti-traitor movement was to find major struggle targets, some of whom had already aroused the attention of higher authorities because of their

behaviors in the rectification study classes. A local cadre of Chuquan County (Huainan region, southwest Jiangsu), Huang, was suspected as a possible Nationalist agent based on his speech and confession report from his study class. Huang was born in a petty bourgeois family, which already classified him as suspicious. In a discussion about the current affairs, Huang especially emphasized the revolutionary tendency of Chiang Kai-shek and induced his classmates to attack the big bourgeoisie (*da zibenjia*) only. Before the discussion, he tried to convince two group members with higher literacy level to support his argument. Later, the higher authority discovered that his standard of living was not consistent with his reported household income. Neither could Huang offer a reasonable explanation of his extra pocket money. His frequent communication with a merchant from Jiangba Town, who had already been suspected of Nationalist espionage, and his love affair with a woman, Wu, whose political background remained uncertain, further aroused the attention of the cadres in charge of the anti-traitor movement.<sup>21</sup> In this case it becomes clear that confession reports and autobiographies not only facilitated the Party's control over its members' private lives, but also prepared for its next move in the rectification: unearthing traitors.

After deciding on potential traitors, presiding officers composed a list of people who were required to attend a ten-day to two-week confession meeting. According to the “three thirds” policy, this group was to be made up of one-third suspects, one-third innocent masses and one-third backbone activists. The higher authority designed such a

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<sup>21</sup> “Yanjiu Huang X de jingyan jiaoxun” (Experiences and lessons of figuring out Huang X). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

proportion of participants to make sure the suspected could be convicted with the help of activists and the political message of a benevolent and legitimate Party would be convincingly spread by the masses.<sup>22</sup>

The confession meeting was generally conducted in the forms of cell meeting and public gathering. Participants were divided into cells, which consisted of about fifteen members each. Like rectification study classes, each cell had a provisional party branch and a leader to preside over cell meetings. On the first day of the confession meeting, a mobilization attended by each participant was held. On the one hand, it aimed at convincing the masses that Nationalist agents had already infiltrated into each party branch. On the other hand, the Party intended to convey to the suspects that it had substantial evidences about their espionage activities and showed its resolution of eradicating traitors.<sup>23</sup>

Under this first round of psychological attack, some suspects would secretly confess to the presiding officers under pressure. However, most suspects chose to resist real confession in hoping of escaping punishment and maintaining their current status within the Party. To do this, they adopted various strategies in cell meetings. First, they enumerated every aspect of their experiences without any emphases and made a fuss on details or word choices to waste their speech time. Second, those who had committed serious mistakes in the past realized they had little chance of escaping. They, therefore,

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<sup>22</sup> “Chuquan qingjian tanbai yundong dahui de jingyang” (Experiences of the public gathering of Chuquan anti-traitor and confession movement). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

<sup>23</sup> “Huainan dangxiao chubu fanxing jingyan jiaoxun, ii” (Experiences and lessons of the preliminary confession in Huainan Party School). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.



only focused on their complicated social relations and misbehaviors in daily works, refusing to admit any political oscillation. They evaded the responsibility of making conclusions in their speeches under the excuse that they were only capable of reciting facts. Third, they furiously charged people who criticized them, claiming to committing suicide to prove their innocence. They sometimes pretended to be insane to avoid providing reasonable explanations about their behaviors under severe attacks by cell members. Finally, they cleverly attacked higher authorities and the Party to evade self-criticisms. For instance, they accused the Party of imparity for not getting promotions; when describing their mistakes, they volunteered to take primary responsibility but always added, “It was approved by the superior.”<sup>24</sup>

Faced with such various resistances, the Party arranged corresponding counteractions. Cell meetings were the first front in which cell leaders coordinated with backbone activists to attack suspects. To encourage confession and avoid intense arguments among members, which could arouse firm resistance among the suspects, presiding officers suggested that cell members only submit written criticisms and the suspects should post their responses on wall posters after cell meetings. However, this did not mean that the Party was taking a soft stance on traitors. Since the participants were convened according to the “three-thirds” principle, in each cell, the suspects remained in the minority and the cell leader had enough manpower to exert psychological pressure on them. Here is how a typical plot was conducted: Two activists played the role of accusers,

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<sup>24</sup> “Huainan dangxiao chubu fanxing jingyan jiaoxun, i” (Experiences and lessons of the preliminary confession in Huainan party school). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

who directly confronted the suspect by asking sensitive questions based on his speech and further condemned his behaviors as treason. Meanwhile, another two activists played the role of mediators who came out to defend the suspect and argued with the two “red faces.” After convincing the suspect to identify with them, they began to persuade the accused to giving a more detailed confession.<sup>25</sup> This tactic helped to unarm the psychological defense of the suspects by convincing them that they would not be abandoned by the Party as long as they made sincere and thorough confessions. When it came to the daily concluding session, the cell leader would praise the ones who had confessed and assigned them some responsibility during the confession meeting, which further demonstrated the Party’s trust in those who had confessed. Moreover, he detailed to his group members the tactics and strategies adopted by a traitor hoping to refuse confession. He also explained typical patterns for identifying a traitor. This set of tactics was designed to convince the suspects that the Party had already held a comprehensive knowledge of their betrayal.<sup>26</sup>

During the cell meeting phase, several supplementary measures were also at work. The first was called “wall poster” (*qiangbao*), which served as an open forum to converge public opinions attacking the suspects. The wall poster was divided into two sections. One was “questions and answers” aiming at suspects of moderate and minor problems. All participants were entitled to questioning the suspects and the accused were required to provide a specific answer to each question. The other was a column of free arguments, in

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<sup>25</sup> “Huainan dangxiao chubu fanxing jingyan jiaoxun, ii” (Experiences and lessons of the preliminary confession in Huainan party school). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

<sup>26</sup> “Huainan dangxiao chubu fanxing jingyan jiaoxun, i” (Experiences and lessons of the preliminary confession in Huainan party school). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

which several activists were arranged to personally accuse major suspects of betrayal against the Party based on a few pieces of substantial evidence. They described in a concluding tune how evil the suspects were and persuaded them to confess their crimes. Such an open collective attack usually crushed down most suspects' resistance, except for the most stubborn ones. The cadres of the Huainan Regional Party School estimated that the pressure of public opinions stemming from wall posters was just as intimidating as being placed in cells.<sup>27</sup> In addition, "individual talk" was a frequently adopted tactic when a stalemate occurred between the suspects and their cell fellows. Under such circumstances, presiding officers took advantage of personal relations, such as fraternal and colleague connections, to persuade suspects to confess. Here personal relationships were manipulated to strengthen individual loyalty to the Party.

Finally, successful persuasion relied on well-arranged cooperation among presiding officers, cell leaders, backbone activists and the masses. The first two were divided into three types according to their official rankings. Lower-level cadres merged into the masses, talking about all the information the Party had knowledge of and collecting possible evidences. Middle-level cadres took on defensive strategies, preventing suspects from knowing the substantial evidences that the higher authority controlled. Higher-level cadres explained the principles of the leniency policy without touching upon too many details.<sup>28</sup> Activists were generously assigned to one of three tasks: one group served as under covers, who hung out with the masses and suspects,

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<sup>27</sup> "Huainan dangxiao chubu fanxing jingyan jiaoxun, ii" (Experiences and lessons of the preliminary confession in Huainan party school). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid..

collecting relevant information and spying on the latter; another took responsibility for attacking the suspects and igniting the masses in various meetings; the last one pretended to be Nationalist agents, openly attacking the Party and making public confessions when necessary.<sup>29</sup>

Witness reports on Rectification Campaign in Jiangsu indicate that most suspects made confessions after going through the procedures outlined above. However, in each confession meeting there were always several stubborn captures, who resisted until the end. In these cases, a wide-scale public gathering, in which not only participants but also nearby masses attended, functioned as the last straw to crush the suspects' will to resist. The 1944 public gathering of the county-wide anti-traitor movement in Chuquan (southwest Jiangsu) provides an ideal example. Prior to the start of the meeting, the presiding cadres made a detailed plan based on the information collected in the cell meeting phase. They first chose two people, Jiang and Xu, who had made sincere and systematic confessions, as models to manipulate the atmosphere of the gathering and induce additional confessions. Jiang and Xu described their experiences of joining the Nationalist Party, becoming Nationalist officials and conducting anti-Communist activities. They used their personal experiences to convince the masses that there was no future in following the Nationalists and persuaded those who were still resisting to admit to their crimes. Both Jiang and Xu were skilled public speakers and drove the masses' emotions to the first peak.

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<sup>29</sup> "Chuquan qingjian tanbai yundong dahui de jingyang" (Experiences of the public gathering of Chuquan anti-traitor and confession movement). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

Then the presiding cadres instructed the activists to shift the masses' attention to Han, who was selected as the gathering's major target. Three witnesses volunteered to take the stage and testify about Han's sabotage against the CCP, and more than ten people reported that he challenged the authority of high-ranking party cadres, bribed local cadres and prevented others from confessing. Under such charges, Han still resisted confessing. This ignited discontent among the masses. One seventy-year-old man shouted, "Mr. Han! The evidence is substantial. Please confess!" However, Han refused to compromise. The presiding officer took the opportunity to reiterate the Party's impartial and lenient attitude towards those who confessed. At this point, Han continued to insist that he had nothing to do with the Nationalists. Irritated by Han's stubbornness and moved by the CCP's leniency, all in attendance, including teenage students and seventy-year-old elders, raised their fists, shouted slogans and demanded that the presiding officers arrest Han. One cried out with enthusiasm that "if such people are not locked up, we will not put down our fists!" Finally, Han was arrested surrounded by the shouts of slogans.<sup>30</sup>

In places where the major target eventually chose to confess, party cadres showed their excellent improvisation. In the confession meeting of Tongcheng (northwest Jiangsu), the major target, He Jifu, frankly admitted his identity as a member of the Youth Leagues of the Three Principles of the People and confessed to conducting

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid..

sabotage activities.<sup>31</sup> He concluded his confession in this way: “I have made a complete confession. However, there must be someone who has similar [anti-Communist thoughts] as I used to have. I suggest that you be better off to also confess today. Otherwise today you came to hear my confession, but I might attend your confession meeting sometimes in future.” His speech received enthusiastic applause from the audience. At this moment, the presiding officer and Defense Department Chief of the Huazhong Bureau, Liang Guobin, stood up and requested that the chair group of the meeting release He immediately. The audience fervently echoed his request, and slogans, such as “release the confessed ones,” continued without stops. After a short discussion, the chair group publically announced that He was officially released. He then proudly stepped out of the seats for suspects and joined his family under the stage. Thousands of audience members shouted, “Support the chair group and release He Jifu immediately” with their fists swinging to show their embrace of the Party and its leniency policy. His example exerted a series of “model” effects over the suspects as well as the audience. Not only did all the suspects frankly confess their espionages, four ordinary people from the audience volunteered to reveal their hidden identities as league members. The Party’s lenient image was further reinforced when one former league member, Li Xiangzhi, was reassigned to the position as the head of intelligence section against Nationalist infiltration in the local Public Safety Bureau after a sincere confession.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Youth Leagues of the Three Principles of People was a junior organization of the Nationalist Party. Its brief introduction is discussed in the next section.

<sup>32</sup> “Tongcheng de tanbai dahui” (The confession meeting in Tongcheng). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.

In such public confession meetings, the manipulation of family bond was also an effective tactic to induce suspects to confess. In Tongchen, the families of the suspects were invited to audit confession meetings. This arrangement intended to exemplify the democratic and lenient image of the Party, break emotional bonds among family members and enhance individual loyalty directly to the Party. After hearing suspects' confessions, their family members cleared out all doubts about the charges and began to condemn their betrayal of the Party. As a representative of the gentry of Hejian Town, Wang Yaheng commented, "About the charge against my father-in-law, Wang Zicai, I held reservations until today. But now, my doubts against the government are completely gone." Some pledged to serve as government surveillance to ensure that their families would not turn against the Party again. Others compared the Nationalists with the Party and exalted the latter's democratic spirit and lenient policy. They reasoned, "We family members would have suffered from their crimes if the Nationalist government had still been in charge...now the government even treated us generously. [The government is] really worth of respect." Some housewives and old women encouraged their husbands or sons to confess, "The government is so merciful, you should confess for your own conscience!"<sup>33</sup> The family members' support of the government further weakened suspects' wills to resist and led to another peak of confession.

Although some anti-traitor movements aimed at collaborationist agents' sabotage, most set the Nationalist infiltration as the major target. From hindsight, this actually revealed the fact that both the CCP and the GMD were eagerly preparing for their

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid..

incoming contest in political, economic and military arenas when the Japanese began to show sign of exhaustion in battlefield. In contrast to the beginning period of the War when the Party showed respect to Chiang and constantly enhanced his authority in its mobilization, it now directly attacked the credibility and integrity of the Nationalists, and claimed that the Communist government was the only legitimate government in China. In the confession meeting of Tongchen, one representative of the local gentry explained the meaning of “legitimacy” to the masses and asserted that only the anti-Japanese democratic government led by the CCP was truly legitimate, since they worked for the people. Another from Yiyang Sub-district said, “I am a GMD member. However, today I want to tell these league members that you should follow the CCP and do good deeds for the masses!” One landlord enumerated the benefits that the landlord class received after the NFA arrived and called out, “We landlords should abandon our bias towards the Party!”<sup>34</sup> Another GMD member, Zhu, used a business metaphor to describe the Three Principles of the People represented in the current three governments in China proper: “The Chongqing government put merchandise in stock to monopolize the market. The Nanjing collaborationist government sells counterfeits. Only the Communist democratic government was the real wholesale.”<sup>35</sup> As the above speeches indicate, ordinary people considered the Party’s legitimacy as residing in the benefits they received after its arrival, while local gentry and landlords endorsed its government as the true heritor to the Three

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid..

<sup>35</sup> “Tongcheng tanbai dahui hou—zai gong’anju ganbu hui shang de jiantao yu zongjie jingyan jiaoxun” (After the confession meeting in Tongcheng—discussion and analyses of experiences and lessons on the cadre meeting of the Public Safety Bureau). In *Huazhong zhengfeng yu fangjian de chubu jingyan*, 1944, GZ 5-58.



Principles of the People. Interestingly, neither mentioned any Communist ideology. In fact, the Party's success in Jiangsu largely stemmed from their compromise on the radical programs, such as land reform, moderate policies toward local gentry and landlords and deliberate blurring of their true ideology.

Both Tongcheng and Chuquan cases perfectly illustrate how the Communist cadres manipulated fanatic public support to deter and attack their targets, while simultaneously establishing a lenient and democratic image. By inviting the participation of suspects' family members, the Party sent a clear message to the masses: when personal affection and family bonds conflicted with its principles, loyalty to the CCP enjoyed foremost priority. Placing personal loyalty to the Party over families continued to be a major characteristic of the Communist political culture. It continues even now.

The reaction of the masses was also worth noticing. Fixed on the idea of embracing the Party's leniency policy, they did not even question why the government had not detected evidence earlier, especially considering that four people had come out of the audience and surrendered themselves to the Party for espionage. On the contrary, they applauded at the Party's leniency, saying, "How come they are also [league members]! The government is so generous for not having arrested them earlier!"<sup>36</sup> Through the brainwashing of the confession meeting, the masses had gotten used to a thinking pattern that deified the Party as an omnipotent and flawless presence. Such a pattern further silenced any opposition to the new party-state. Meanwhile, the political culture of strengthening internal consensus reinforced by the Rectification and the authoritarian

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid..

tendency of its organizational hierarchy revealed that the Party lacked efficient reins to check the movement from bottom up once it became uncontrollable. As a result, deviation inevitably occurred.

#### INEVITABLE DEVIATION: AN EXTREME CASE IN SIYANG

Although both the CCP and the GMD regarded defeating Japan as the primary target during the War of Resistance, neither ceased their efforts to appeal to the masses. They continued to expand personnel and infiltrate into each other, especially near the end of the War. In April 1938, to compete for the support of the youth against the CCP, the Provisional National Congress of the GMD passed a resolution, organizing the Youth League of the Three Principles of the People (*sanmin zhuyi qingnian tuan*) as a direct subordinate to the GMD. Chiang assigned the two major intelligence systems—the Renaissance Association (*Fuxing she*) led by the Military Investigation and Statistics Bureau and the CC Clique—to be in charge of recruitment in central China.<sup>37</sup> Later the Renaissance Association was merged with the League, and its members became the backbones of the League. As the prewar stronghold of the Nationalists, Jiangsu Province was a major target [for](#) the infiltration of the Youth League. Under such circumstances, the Siyang case occurred during the anti-traitor movement.

Siyang County was located in the north Jiangsu and contiguous to Anhui province. It was then the center of the Huaibei region, one of the seven NFA regional

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<sup>37</sup> There were mainly two intelligence systems within the GMD during its regime in mainland China. One was the Military Investigation and Statistics Bureau, which was officially founded in 1938 and led by Dai Li (1896-1946), one of the founders of the Nationalist intelligence system. The other was the Central Committee Bureau of Investigation and Statistics under the control of the CC clique, short for “central club” established in 1927. The core of the CC Clique was the Chen brothers, Chen Guofu (1892-1951) and Chen Lifu (1898-2001).

bases in central China. In the spring of 1943, a large number of Youth League members were discovered in the Party sponsored Huaibei Middle School. The school required some of the students who it suspected were league members to quit studies and return to their native places. Since a considerable portion of the Huaibei Middle School students were from Siyang County, the Siyang Public Safety Bureau ordered local administrators to keep close surveillance on the activities of these returning students. It further instructed its subordinate offices to figure out the following problems: whether the youngsters had already joined the Youth League before attending Huaibei Middle school or vice versa; whether there was any other local Youth League members or branches. Meanwhile, the Siyang Public Safety Bureau received guidelines from the higher authority identifying the major target of this anti-traitor movement as the Nationalist agents, who were usually the backbones of the Youth League. Based on the Party's message of leniency, ordinary members would be released once they realized the counter-revolutionary nature of the League and agreed to discard their memberships after proper education (Chen Yu 1983).

Soon one of the detectives who were sent out for investigation, Hu Hai, reported that Wang, an elementary school principal in Longji Sub-district, might be a League member. The information Hu had collected showed that Wang once wrote a poster criticizing the Party and convened secret meetings for unclear purposes. Moreover, he spread rumors against Grain Tax collection and publically encouraged collaboration with the Japanese. Hu's report was confirmed by his fellow detectives, who were dispatched for further investigation. Meanwhile, another female detective, Zhao Jichuan, also revealed that quite a few elementary school teachers in the Longji Sub-district showed

oscillation in the struggles against the landlords (Tong ding si tong 1983). Based on these clues, the local elementary schools of Longji become the major suspected spots of Youth League activities. The county bureau thus asked Hu to take Wang to the office for interrogation. Wang denied all the charges in the first inquest, but several days later, he admitted that he was a Youth League member. Soon, he was officially arrested by the County Public Safety Bureau and transferred to a house of detention in the county office. In order to qualify himself for the policy of leniency, principal Wang not only admitted his own espionage, but also revealed several other League members, including two teachers in his school and another elementary school teacher in Jinzhen Sub-district, Wang Jue (Chen Yu 1983). Half a year later the higher authority discovered that neither principal Wang nor the three persons he brought out were League members or related to Nationalist espionage. However, the county bureau officers tried every means to convict them. From hindsight, the arrest of Wang Jue was a turning point in the Siyang case. From then on, the investigation lost rational control and slid into leftist extremism.

Wang Jue received intense torture during the interrogation after his arrest. No longer able to stand any more corporal punishment, he volunteered to confess his Youth League membership and revealed numerous people in Siyang's educational professional circle, including almost every elemental school principal in the county, as hidden agents. Wang at first claimed to be a division leader, and later promoted himself to the position as one of the core leaders in charge of military forces. Since he was in fact not a League member, Wang had no knowledge of the organizational structure of the Youth League. To make his word convincing, he fabricated an organizational chart based on the Party's

political system: “The Youth League has one county committee and one administrative office in Siyang, and, under the county level, there is a sub-district ranking. Siyang county committee is subordinate to the district, whose leader is Liu binru (Tong ding si tong 1983).” Liu was a convicted Nationalist agent who had absconded at the time. Coincidentally, a blind young man reported to the county office that Wang Jue used to serve in the Nationalist army and the GMD county office and had secretly hidden a gun wrapped in a red cloth by burying it (Chen Yu 1983). There is no way to deduce why Wang made up such a long list of suspects and included details that did nothing but confirm his guilt. He may have been trying to indict more people in order to decrease his share of the responsibility. Even more remarkably, none of the investigators questioned how a blind person could find Wang hide his gun and know that the wrapping cloth was red.

Following Wang’s confession, a large-scale arrest began among educational circles in Siyang. Faced with the same set of tortures, the arrested could do nothing but turn in more innocent people. Soon county administrative staffs and local mass association cadres become suspects in the investigation. Yin Shujin, the deputy of the Siyang Fiscal and Grain Bureau, was arrested in the third round of arrest when he went to the county office to attend *tuanbai* during the New Year of 1944.<sup>38</sup> Yin Xi, the head of local Youth Resistance Association was also arrested during this period. He participated in the previous investigation and had a full knowledge of what he was going to face in the

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<sup>38</sup> *Tuaitbai* is a kind of symposium held by the Communist administrations before holidays, such as the New Year and Spring Festival. It is attended by Communist cadres and important local powers, and regarded as welfare of the Communist government.

detention house. As a result, he committed suicide soon after being arrested (Tong ding si tong 1983).

As the charges expanded uncontrollably, two kinds of opinions emerged among the Party County Committee. One group asserted that the evidence was substantial and the case was a great accomplishment in the anti-traitor movement; the other held reservations and suggested a temporary stop to the arrests and a shift to focus on verifying suspects' testimonies. The first opinion soon prevailed because the standing committee member and county chief, Xie Kui, reported that League members had infiltrated the most recent training class of party cadres. Xie was one of Siyan's highest-ranking party leaders, second only to the county party secretary, Zhu Hongxiang. His words held significant weight, and the scale of suspects was therefore enlarged to include all major party cadres in Siyang (Chen Yu 1983). The sub-district secretary of Longji, Tian Zhaolin, who participated in the investigation, protested the continuous arrests and questioned the possibility of such a large-scale infiltration of Nationalist agents in Siyang. Tian soon became a suspect himself due to these protests as well as suspicious social and family relations—some of his friends and relatives had already been arrested in this movement. Before Tian was eventually locked up, the county secretary, Zhu Hongxiang, told him, "You can retain your official position, and we will keep your confession secret as long as you confirm your League membership." Confused by the true intention of this anti-traitor movement, Tian declined his superior's proposal (Tong ding si tong 1983).

Apart from these inducements and corporal tortures, there were several other major strategies for obtaining indictments. First, one suspect would be brought into a

room where he or she was forced to eavesdrop on another suspect's investigation, which was relevant to the charges against him/her. Then the suspect would be asked to testify whether what he had heard was true in his own inquest. Second, investigators deliberately created situations in which suspects could collaborate to make up identical testimonies, which they could later use as evidence to indict other suspects. Third, suspects were not allowed to eat, rest or sleep during long hours of investigations. Last, investigators would bring suspects to a quiet and remote place late at night and pretended that they were going to execute them. As a result of these tactics, investigators were highly successful in eliciting confessions (Chen Yu 1983).

The growing number of confessions aroused the attention of higher authorities. The Huaibei Regional Office also dispatched staff to help the investigation (Chen Yu 1983). The Regional Party Committee even praised the Siyang County for revealing such an important espionage case, which further encouraged the county leaders to search for more suspects. Deng Zihui, the Regional Party Secretary, instructed Zhu Hongxiang, the County Party Secretary, to report updates on the case every ten to fourteen days. (Zhu Hongxiang 1983). However, this communication did not help the charging cadres return to rational thinking or shift the focus of investigation from collecting testimonies and arresting suspects to reasonable analyses and verifying evidence. At the peak of the Siyang case, four out of seven sub-district chiefs and party secretaries were arrested. When they met in the detention house, they kidded themselves saying, "We could have a meeting once a county committee cadre arrives" (Tong ding si tong 1983). At the county level, only the party secretary, Zhu Hongxiang, the county chief, Xie Kui, and the chief

of the Public Safety Bureau, Cao Yulin, retained their positions and continued extorting new testimonies and arresting more suspects. Later reports show that there were altogether 151 people arrested, including ordinary peasants, students, teachers and administrative, military and party cadres. The number of people who were detained for inquest reached more than one thousand (Huaibei suwan bianqu xingshu gong'anju 1943).

It was not until NFA personnel were charged as Youth League members that the Huazhong Bureau found aspects of the investigation in Siyang to be abnormal. Since some soldiers and cadres of the Ninth Brigade of the NFA Fourth Division were involved in the case, the commander, Wei Guoqing, noticed that there were an unreasonably high number of suspects under arrest. After a preliminary investigation, Wei argued that it was impossible that there could be that many Nationalist agents in the area. Unfortunately, his proposal was entirely disregarded by the Huaibei Regional Party Committee. Wei, therefore, directly reported to the head of the Defense Department of Huazhong Bureau, Liang Guobin, who later initiated a new investigation on the Siyang case. Liang's investigation eventually proved that none of the hundreds of arrested suspects were Nationalist agents. The Huaibei Regional Committee subsequently admitted their mistakes in leading the investigation. The county chief, Xie Kui was ousted from his position; the deputy of Regional Public Safety Bureau, Tang Jinshi, and chief of the County Bureau, Cao Yulin, received disciplinary warnings; and, the county secretary, Zhu Hongxiang, was subject to a one-year probation within the Party (*liudang chakan*) (Chen Yu 1983). Putting too much concentration on an imagined Nationalist espionage, the Siyang County overlooked regular military defensive measures, and as a



result, seriously suffered in the Japanese mopping-up campaign. The former county chief, Xie, was killed in this encounter (Zhu Hongxiang 1983). The Siyang case was later utilized as a lesson in subjectivism, individual heroism and bureaucratism in rectification study classes.

Since the higher authority concluded that the mishandling of the Siyang case stemmed from subjectivism, individual heroism and bureaucratism, the analyses and reflections by the concerned cadres dwelled on these topics. No one probed deeper to question what made these cadres collectively abandon rational thinking during the investigation, or the political culture and institutions that created such irrationality, lacked proper reins to balance power and silenced potential opposition opinions among the masses. The tendency to emphasize testimonies and neglect physical evidences was pervasive in all kinds of investigations, not merely the Siyang case. The Party's policy of leniency was misused by local cadres in daily operations in order to extort fake testimony, which created a tense anxiety among suspects and advocated for a strategy of "confess for light sentences." Higher authorities usually regarded the numbers of suspects and convicted as an index to measure the achievements of local administrations. The Huaibei Regional Committee publically commended Siyang County for this very reason. Zhu Hongxiang later reflected, "The more the leaders praised us, the more effort we put on extorting testimony and arresting people" (Zhu Hongxiang 1983). The political institution of the new party-state established a habitual pattern among its cadres, in which they were responsible to their superiors rather than the masses. The investigational procedures in the Siyang case were typical for all public safety bureaus. The abnormal

aspects of the interrogation were revealed only because the case involved personnel stationed in the NFA, creating instability in the military forces. Here, the NFA presented a balancing force powerful enough to check the Regional Party Committee. The evidence suggests that the Siyang case would have been entirely under the jurisdiction of the Huaibei Regional Committee had the suspects not had military backgrounds. In most cases, however, there was a lack of this type of balance of power, which turned out to be a serious defect in the political institutions of the Party.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the course through which the CCP shifted the focus of its development from quantity to quality. This shift stemmed from the Party's internal needs for institutional adjustment as well as external demands forced by objective situations. The rapid increase in the number of party members made the lack of proper political disciplines particularly dangerous. As a result, most newly recruited local cadres did not understand their social and political roles as different from those of traditional officials. Like their predecessors, they demonstrated their elite status by making more money from their official positions, benefiting their relatives and friends and establishing partnership with powerful members of local gentry. These practices helped to build their personal prestige and authority in local communities. Not surprisingly, this new Communist power deteriorated at such a rapid speed due to corruption and extravagance. Moreover, these problems seriously weakened the Party's credibility and stained the public image of the new party-state.

Fortunately, such tendencies of corruption and extravagance in the party cadres were curbed by subsequent rejuvenating movements. The policy of “strengthening army and simplifying administration” facilitated a timely expulsion of undesirable party members and cadres that were recruited during the Party’s early development. It also enhanced its centralized leadership in local administrations. Meanwhile, the Rectification Campaign reinforced an internal political consensus within the Party by creating a new political culture in which criticism, self-criticism and public confession became common methods for the Party to crush people’s self-esteems, break up their personal and social relationships and intrude into their private lives. Such a culture encouraged mutual surveillance among colleagues, friends and even family members, and enhanced individual loyalty and the unquestionable authority of the Party. The ways in which rectification study classes operated and the anti-traitor movement was launched, especially the Siyang case, posed a significant challenge to Seldon’s populist contention that no cadres were imprisoned or excluded from the Party in the course of the intensive study and criticism that began in the Spring of 1942 (Mark Seldon 1971, 196). On the contrary, my study supports the finding of Esherick’s case study of Shaanxi. It indicates that the deepening rectification and anti-traitor movement created psychological tension in the masses as well as cadres, as it suggested that any grumblings could be tried as serious political crimes (Joseph Esherick 1994). As a result, silencing any opposition became a prerequisite for the political consensus and deification of the CCP. This suffocated channels to receive alternative opinions from the bottom up. Due to its expanding territory and augmented human resources after the War, the Party did not have

to sacrifice the quality of its cadres for the sake of quantitative expansion. This problem was temporarily overshadowed by dramatic growth. However, this institutional defect continues to undermine Communist governance until today.

Since its establishment, the CCP struggled for survival against continuous attacks from the Beiyang regime, the Nationalists and the Japanese. The continuous warfare forced it to find the most efficient political structure to expand and strengthen its power. This political structure facilitated the unprecedented development of the CCP in Jiangsu during the War. Furthermore, the efficiency of such an authoritarian political institution gave the Party a serious advantage in its struggle with the GMD, which continuously suffered from internal factionalism. However, its defect was equally powerful. In the course of the party-state building, the CCP overrelied on the personal abilities of its cadres in daily operations and overemphasized on their absolute obedience to the higher authority. However, it overlooked the development of institutional strength to check and balance different powers within this building. These problems would gradually float to the surface and cause serious social panics after 1949, when the CCP took over China.

## Chapter Seven Epilogue

Communist base areas in Jiangsu short lived after the War of Resistance. Considering itself one of the victors of the Resistance War, the Party actively prepared for takeover of areas controlled by the Japanese and collaborationist forces. Nevertheless, the GMD had already reached an agreement with the Japanese, who would surrender only to the Nationalist Army. As a result, once their outside enemy disappeared, the CCP-GMD skirmish soon escalated until they were on the verge of another civil war.

The strength of Communist and Nationalist military forces varied in different regions. In Manchuria, the GMD encountered considerable difficulties in taking over the collaborationist administrations since the CCP, patronized by the Soviet Union, controlled a large amount of Japanese munitions and supplies they would use for later military confrontation. Nevertheless, the GMD prewar influence and its social networks with the collaborationist personnel enabled the Nationalists to outcompete the Communists over the course of the takeover in Jiangsu province. On November 1, 1945, the NFA divisions stationed in the south of the lower Yangtze River officially announced its retreat northward and published an open letter to the masses. It claimed that the NFA voluntarily withdrew to show the CCP's sincerity in maintaining a truce and building a new democratic government with the GMD (Xinsijun 1945). The size of the withdrawn force reached around 50,000 soldiers. Later when the Civil War broke out in 1946, the NFA headquarters was moved northward from Jiangsu to Shangdong province and the

CCP ordered that the entire NFA and its subordinate local forces, almost 310,000 soldiers, evacuated from the base areas in central China.

The Communist influence, however, did not cease with the evacuation of the NFA. Although the regular force retreated, the CCP left militia and local military troops totaling 960,000 persons and various mass associations, which secretly maintained their activities and functioned as an intelligence and corvee source before the Communists returned in 1949. These people further served as a personnel reservoir of local administrative cadres after the Communist triumph. Such support could never have been achieved without the Party's mass mobilization and local penetration during the Resistance War. In this sense, the Jiangsu experience is no less significant than that of other base areas in foretelling characteristics of the Party's government in China after the revolution.

The Resistance War was a modest period in the Communist Revolution in terms of the Party's claims, programs and policies towards landlords as they sought to prevent elite collaboration with the Japanese. Among the wartime base areas, those in Jiangsu were among the most restrained when implementing these programs and policies as a result of the lack of social supports and mobilization during prewar period. To win over various social groups, the Party deliberately avoided any discussion of land reform, property redistribution or class struggle, tactics typically used to serve as major measures to destroy pre-existing social networks and value systems. In this sense, the Communist movement in Jiangsu did not really carry "communist" characteristics. It is more beneficial then to conceptualize it as more of a social reform than a revolution. However,

considering the manpowers and revenues the Party was able to obtain throughout the War, it was no wonder a huge success. Here I highlight some important issues that have emerged in the above thematic discussions.

First of all, the most conspicuous characteristic of the wartime Communist movement in Jiangsu was the Party's attempt to accommodate preexisting social and cultural nexuses entrenched in the local communities rather than destroy them. This strategy was also key for the success in social mobilization and penetration. The Party resorted to rent reduction and tax rate adjustment as major measures to redistribute private properties, which did not fundamentally alter previous socioeconomic structures of local communities. Although it attempted to deconstruct the social power networks of traditional local gentry and elites by promoting peasant activists, the Party hardly touched the preexisting norm of patron-client relationship deeply entrenched in people's mindset. Instead, it sought opportunities to replace local elites as a new patron in local communities. For instance, the Communists organized the grain borrowing program during the spring famines to maintain the peasant's subsistence. Even if the philanthropic grains were still provided by the rich, the Party successfully enhanced its patronage by serving as the coordinator between peasants and landlords. Meanwhile, the Communists infiltrated popular entertainment by organizing peasant drama associations, which performed plays with revolutionary content in the form of local dramas and tunes. Furthermore, they relied on conventional rituals to facilitate their mobilization and penetration. During the farewell conscription ceremonies, the enlistees publically rode donkeys or sat in sedans led by village heads, a traditional way to glorify their families

and lineages. Mass workers even created secret societies to recruit and contain local strongmen and bullies, attempting to convert these social forces into resistance associations subject to the Communist leadership. On the basis of the discussion of previous chapters, one can detect the process, in which the Party assumed communal responsibilities and gradually transformed them into party-sponsored organizations in order to mobilize peasants and penetrate local society.

Second, the Party would not have been able to ensure its substantial control over local communities without the assistance of various mass associations, especially the Peasant Resistance Association. Conspicuous state intrusion might arouse direct resistance from society, particularly local elites who wanted to maintain their control in local communities. Spontaneous mass associations, however, were more likely to win endorsements from the peasantry as well as landlords, especially using anti-Japanese rhetoric. The Peasant Resistance Association actually functioned as a form of “substantive government” that connected the Party with ordinary peasants in the base areas in Jiangsu. In order to shorten the psychological distance with the peasantry, the Party usually let the Peasant Association publically take the responsibilities for tax collection, winter schools, aid programs for military dependents, anti-pacification campaigns and so on. Relying on their comprehensive knowledge of local communities, these association cadres flexibly adopted their methods to optimize results, not always keeping accordance with Communist doctrines. In some places where they failed to fully develop connections between the Party and the association in daily operations, ordinary peasants seldom recognized the existence of the CCP. The Party’s reliance on Peasant



Associations for quotidian administrations further blurred the association's function and identity in the Communist political system. This was also caused by an overlapped personnel arrangement in peasant associations, administrative offices and party branches. This phenomenon virtually reflected the defect of the vaguely defined jurisdiction in the Party's political institution.

No matter how successful the wartime Communist movement was in the Jiangsu base areas, there was a trend of gradually lessening control over local cadres descending with administrative levels. At sub-district, township or village levels, corruption and coercion frequently occurred in local cadres' quotidian administrative operations. Lacking a coherent view of the Party's overall development, they could not avoid falling victim to either conservative inclinations that made them submissive to traditional local elites, or ultra-leftism that risked losing supports from landlords and rich peasants. This phenomenon emerged for various reasons. First, since the Communist influence was limited in prewar Jiangsu, when the NFA entered this region, the Party largely relied on personal social networks of peasant activists to recruit new members. As I have shown in previous chapters, the recruitment process lacked clear explanations of Communist doctrines and the recruited had private motives when joining the Party. These factors made the local cadres a social force not much different from the traditional elite class, who put amassing personal fortunes and prestiges as top priorities, in participating in the Communist movement. Second, in some base areas that were adjacent to the Japanese front, the Party had to retain previous *bao* and *jia* heads and depended on their power networks to maintain tax collection, conscription and daily administration. Since these

people's power base did not derive entirely from the Party, the latter lacked effective methods to regulate their behaviors or enhance Communist disciplines. Although local cadres with their knowledge of the communities largely facilitated the Party's penetration into village life, surveillance and control over them remained a constant issue for the CCP's higher authorities throughout the War.

After 1943 when the Party's rapid expanding membership had fostered a substantial social base and control over local communities, it deliberately slowed down its recruitment and shifted its priority from quantity to quality of party members and local cadres. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, it employed "strengthening army and simplifying administration" and the Rectification Campaign to expel malfeasant party members and cadres as well as to reinforce Communist indoctrination within the Party. The first program mainly focused on containing prevalent corruption among local cadres, as it had aroused considerable public complaints and stained the reputation of the newly established Communist government. The Rectification Campaign was even more important in terms of establishing an internal ideological consensus and eradicating potential and existing elements of sectarianism. These elements resulted from the Party's development tactics of the early period when recruitment largely relied on personal social networks. Such reliance later encouraged people to group together under common interests and mutual social connections. When such groups had grown large and powerful enough to challenge the higher authorities, they significantly endangered the Party's control over its own personnel as well as local communities. Certainly, the Party would not tolerate such internal resistance. The Rectification Campaign thus served as an

imperative channel to prevent and annihilate these deviations at local levels, and enhanced direct loyalty to the Party.

Although it contributed to the ideological consolidation of the party-state, the Rectification Campaign also revealed the authoritarian inclination embedded in the Communist political institutions. During roughly one-month intensive and isolated rectification training classes, each participant received a thorough personal background check, self and mutual criticism on his working style and personality, and ideological indoctrination. The result of the training classes was that the Party ensured its control over the participants' public activities as well as private lives. Party members therefore, were incapable of retain individual autonomy or bargain space vis-à-vis the Party authority. Even worse, this absolute and arbitrary control lacked checks and balances to contain its power. The Siyan incident was illustrative in revealing this institutional defect. The Rectification Campaign no doubt improved administrative efficiency and reinforced ideological consensus within the Party, which earned the CCP a considerable advantage in terms of military maneuvers later during the Civil War. The authoritarian inclination of the Communist political institutions, nevertheless, inevitably created severe problems in the Party's governance after 1949.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that the key to the success of the wartime Communist movement was the Party's wise accommodation of preexisting social and cultural nexuses. This, however, did not mean that the Communists gave up the attempts to create their own political culture to refashion people's everyday lives. On the contrary, the Party deliberately nurtured a new culture in which each aspect of

people's lives was organized and politicized. During slack seasons, peasants were encouraged to attend winter schools, which not only served as literacy classes, but also created a forum to judge domestic disputes. Mass workers replaced the content of local dramas with revolutionary stories, making them a channel to infiltrate popular entertainment in local communities. Meanwhile, mass associations, local administrative offices and party branches kept a regular meeting system, through which the Party enhanced the collective identities of their members and develop personal loyalty to their organizations. Although frequent meetings sometimes aroused complaints from participants, this system did distinguish the CCP from other political entities in the minds of its own members as well as ordinary peasants. Another important measure of this process of politicization was the public struggle meetings, which the Party adopted to provoke class conflicts, break up the stalemate of mobilization, and solve landlord-tenant disputes. Although the Party claimed that such struggle meetings reflected people's free wills and its determination to promote democracy, mass workers had already made arrangements to ensure the scenarios would develop in a Party sanctioned way. However, even the most sophisticated arrangement could not prevent leftist extremism during actual meetings. This side effect might not have been a fatal issue in the revolutionary period. Nonetheless, it would arouse large-scale social chaos under the Communist governance during the first three decades of the PRC.

The Communist movement in the base areas in Jiangsu Province should not be understood as a revolution if one defines "revolution" as a process of radical class conflicts, fundamental revamping of social structures, power networks and public

mindsets, and direct antagonism between the government and its people. It was rather a gradual and moderate course of political and social reform, in which the Party played the role as part of the state power and fulfilled some of the tasks, such as rent reduction, that the Nationalist government was not able to achieve in the prewar period. However, one should not deny the fact that the CCP successfully penetrated local communities and established substantial control in the form of prevalent mass associations and local party branches. Although the NFA and the CCP withdrew from Jiangsu at the end of 1945, this social power network did not vanish and continued to function until the Communist forces regained this region under the name of the People's Liberation Army in 1949. It was then that a "communist" revolution, in a conventional sense, was launched in Jiangsu province. The wartime experience thereby continued to shape the way that the new state negotiated and intervened in the lives of various social classes at the local level.

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## **Vita**

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